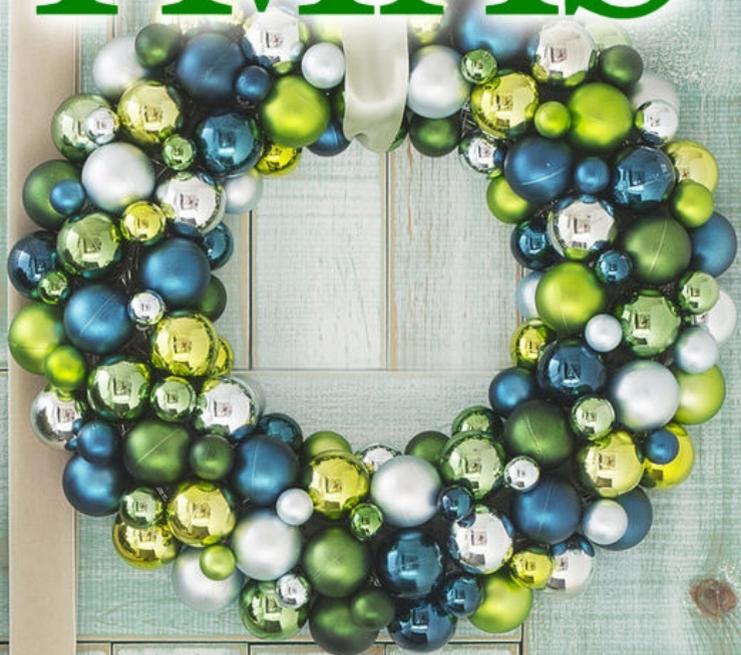


Celebrate Christmas in Style

*Celebrating*

# CHRISTMAS



## 25 Stylish Wreaths

ELEGANT  
PLACE SETTINGS

Fruit Centerpieces  
Handmade Cards  
Eco-Friendly Wrapping Ideas  
Elegant Holiday Dressing  
Festive Recipes



# Pumpkin & Dried Flowers Thanksgiving Centerpiece

## You Will Need:

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Dried Flowers

Pumpkin Carving Tools

... and a Little Creativity!



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## Letter from the Editor

Dear Friend,

Writing on this familiar space after a hiatus of 3 years is an experience I am cherishing every moment of. I thank you for your emails that never made me forget that I am not the only one missing this fabulous publication. Never mind why, when and how we got to skipping publishing your favorite holiday magazine, let us simply rejoice in the news that we are back!

As always, the magazine is filled with creative ideas to celebrate Christmas in style, for I am yet to meet a person who does not wish to. But one thing that none of us needs to do, is to let the "perfection syndrome" get to us to an extent that it begins to belittle the true meaning of the season. The very recent 'Hurricane Sandy' is only one of the reminders that life is too short to be wasted perfecting a table setting and that there is no joy on earth greater than being blessed with friends and family to celebrate Christmas with.

Nevertheless, Christmas continues to be one of those special times when our creativity knows no limits and we go all out preparing for the festivities. Cooking, baking, crafting and decorating are all eagerly awaited all year long.

This year, other than creative ideas for your home and table, we also have a special feature by French author Marie-Anne Lecouer on dressing up elegantly for all the celebratory evenings lined up. It is a great guide to pulling together the best looks this season and I hope you find the tips as inspiring as I did.

Until next year,

Happy Holidays!

Lata Tokhi



Editor's Personal Blog: <http://www.latatokhi.com>  
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Unusual Christmas wreaths made using Christmas baubles, lavender boughs and feathers inspire creativity. Check out the how-to on Pg. 25.



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# Festive Ideas

## Left & Below:

Do not forget the little details. They are the most special things to take care of, and often bring smiles to many faces. Your door knobs, for example. Bring holiday cheer to any hand that reaches out for them. Here are two ways to decorate them, but the possibilities are endless.

Spare some of tree ornaments or tie a ribbon to a bauble or a stocking and slide them into a door handle. A handspun fabric ornament can also be used.

This could also be a great way to use your Christmas cards. Find a smaller card or use the front of an old card, punch a hole, tie it using ribbon and slide it into a handle or a knob.



### Saved for Santa

You've made your Christmas cookies, but there is a lot of time before Christmas....how do you save the best cookies for Santa so they are fresh AND no one else in the house eats them by mistake? The answer is simple - a plastic cover that fits securely around any plate, that will tell everyone that these cookies are SAVED FOR SANTA!!!! Get them online at [www.savedforsanta.com](http://www.savedforsanta.com)



# Festive Ideas

**Right:**

Flower arrangements for Christmas need not be elaborate. Less is more with seasonal red berries. A branch of berries along with some greens look festive in white vases.

**Below:**

Fabric crafters who are into patchwork and quilting can create one-of-a-kind keepsake gifts that will be cherished for a long, long time to come. Get patched quilt squares framed to give as gifts. It is easier than making an entire quilt and you will be able to make several of these in no time and with most of the fabric coming out of your scrap box.

**Below Right:**

A little touch that makes a lot of difference to any Christmas Day décor is Candle rings. When making your wreaths, be sure to make some miniature versions to use as circular bases for your Christmas candles. Berry wreaths look especially beautiful since most of us use red or white candles during this time of the year.





## Maple Walnut Sweet Potato Pie

*The holidays are the perfect time of year to create traditions with your loved ones, in and out of the kitchen. For a guaranteed post-dinner showstopper they won't forget soon, treat your friends and family to this too-good-to-resist Maple Walnut Sweet Potato Pie. With just a dollop of maple whipped cream and a sprinkle of walnuts on top, this velvety, distinctly Canadian dessert is sure to become a holiday tradition.*

**Sweet Potatoes remain holiday favorites year after year. Here's another winner.**

(NC)

**Preparation time:**

15 minutes

**Serves 6**

**Ingredients:**

1 package Tenderflake Frozen Deep Dish Pie Shells

**Filling:**

1 cup (250 mL) maple syrup  
2/3 cup (150 mL) light cream (5%)  
1/3 cup (75 mL) melted butter  
3 eggs  
2 tbsp (30 mL) all-purpose flour  
4 tsp (20 mL) vanilla extract  
3/4 tsp (3 mL) each salt and ground cinnamon  
1/4 tsp (1 mL) ground nutmeg  
2 cups (500 mL) puréed sweet potatoes

**Maple Walnuts:**

1 1/2 cups (375 mL) walnut halves  
1/4 cup (50 mL) maple syrup  
1/2 tsp (2 mL) sea salt

**Maple Whipped Cream:**

1 cup (250 mL) whipping cream (35%)  
1/4 cup (50 mL) pure maple syrup

**Directions:**

1. Defrost pie shells according to package directions and place on baking sheet.

2. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).

3. Whisk maple syrup with cream, melted butter, eggs, flour, vanilla extract, salt, cinnamon and nutmeg until well combined.

Whisk in sweet potatoes until smooth.

4. Pour filling into pie shells. Bake in preheated oven, on the lowest rack, for 45-55 minutes or until filling is set.

Transfer pies to a cooling rack and cool to room temperature.

5. Combine walnuts and maple syrup in a non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring often, for 3 to 5 minutes or until nuts are well glazed.

Spread nuts in a single layer on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Sprinkle evenly with salt. Cool until set. Arrange nuts decoratively around edge of cooled pie.

6. Prepare maple whipped cream by beating whipping cream with maple syrup until very stiff.

Dollop onto individual servings and garnish with remaining nuts.



More seasonal recipes are available online at [www.tenderflake.com](http://www.tenderflake.com).

**As a parent, I would often strive at Christmas time to recreate the feelings of anticipation and magic that I had felt as a child, for my own daughter.**

My husband and I were able to, for many years, maintain her belief of Santa Claus. He and I took it upon ourselves to improve on the illusion from one year to the next, even as she grew older, and wiser to our wiles.

Of course the ritual began when she was a pre-schooler, her letters written in her small, unsteady hand. A single, heavily iced cookie in some seasonal shape left on the kitchen table with a glass of milk, both of which would be gone by morning. Standard Christmas procedure required the leaving of a carrot as well; the reindeer could not be forgotten!

We hid presents in the branches of the sparkling, decorated balsam, so the tree's spicy oils delicately scented the wrapping. Her eyes shone when she'd discover her gifts hidden among the baubles and glitter.

As she got older however, it became more of a challenge for us to convince her that Santa, an imaginary creation, was more than that. We had to come up with sneakier ideas, more creative scenarios, to keep up appearances.

One year we were able to sneak into her bedroom while she slept, remove the quilt that covered her, to replace it with the desired "Lion King"



## I Believe in Santa

A Mom recalls how she managed the tricky age of 12 when the existence of Santa Claus begins to be challenged

comforter. She had to be coerced back into her bedroom, her excitement was so great that she'd flown out of bed, completely missing the new blanket she'd been snugly tucked into.

As luck, or fate, would have it, things took on a life of their own that year.

We had always had to be aware of things that interested her, she rarely, if ever, requested anything specific from "Santa". Generally she'd just been satisfied with

whatever she received.

Christmas Eve that year found us enjoying a meal with my parents, who lived some ways out of town. On the late night drive home, I reminded her that she still hadn't written her letter to Santa.

She laughed at me and made some comment on how ridiculous it was to be doing that at her "mature" age. Her Dad asked that she indulge us this one last time then, just because, "sometimes you have to believe in something".

Once home she begrudgingly went up to her room to write, while we laid the table. A beer for Santa, (she had decided some years before that he worked way too hard for JUST milk), and the carrot for the deer. She brought the note down and dropped it on the table, hugged us goodnight and returned to her room.

As we read the note we realized that the only request she'd made was a video game system that was popular at the time. A toy we had sworn we would not buy due to its expense. Yet what she didn't know was that a week earlier we had changed our minds and had purchased the

system, along with a couple of games. One of the games we'd chosen was also on her list. We awoke to her shrieks of joy, dancing around the living room. Thanking us profusely for getting her exactly what she wanted.

I had to question her, however. "What makes you think we bought this?"

"Well who else could have, Mom?" was her slightly sarcastic reply.

I continued, "Consider this; we got home at almost midnight last night. We had no idea what you wanted until you wrote the letter last night, and

even if we wanted to, had no way of going out to buy it. What store is open at that time on Christmas Eve?"

She absorbed that for a moment.

"That's just messed up, Mom. So, Santa's real." She smirked.

"Does it really matter?" I asked.

She smiled a little, ran a finger along the game system.

"No, it doesn't matter. Sometimes you just have to believe in something."

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# A Candy Cane Christmas

# *Daddy's Guide to Surviving The Lead Up To Christmas With The Kids !!!*

A Stay-at-Home Dad prepares you for when Daddy has to take the charge!



*Ahh! Christmas really is the most magical time of year isn't it? There is nothing better than on Christmas morning being woken up at some ungodly hour by your kids to be asked if Santa has been yet. This may sound sarcastic, but I really do not mean it to be. One of the best parts about being a dad for me is Christmas I love it.*

With that being said Christmas day is just a small part of the Christmas experience. As much as I love the actual day of Christmas there is no denying the fact

that the lead up to Christmas can be a royal pain in the backside. Sometimes the school holidays for whatever reason will result in the kids getting off school up to a

week before Christmas day. That is a lot of time for kids to drive you crazy. Of course the whole week leading up to it they are crazily excited.

**So how do I take care of the kids at Christmas?**

And stop them driving me crazy and me then in turn having to lock them up in the garage? Well its not easy! I would be lying is I said it would be.

For me the best way to approach the lead up to Christmas day is to think of it like you are in the armed forces and this is a tour of duty.

Hey I know this may sound a little extreme, but its the best thing I compare it to. You need to have every little detail planned.

If you give the kids a spare hour then prepare to be driven mad. To be fair its not as much a chore as I am making out as you can actually do some really fun stuff with the kids leading up to the big day.

### **Playing Outside**

You may think that I am crazy here suggesting playing outside in December, but hear me out. If its snowing then you have it made as there is no end to what you can do. We have a great time making snow men or having snow fights. The best part about snow fights is building a snow fort.

If your family is anything like mine however, snow fights are great until someone takes it too far and it ends up with someone getting hurt.

### **On Certain Days...**

Another thing we like to do and it may just be us being crazy is to play mud tackle football. We do this on years when we do not have much snow, but a bunch of rain.

Now my wife hates mud football, but we love it. I mean there is the downside of catching your death from cold and getting covered in mud, but these are just a small price to pay for some exciting mud football action. Now guys trust me when I tell you this. You wife or significant other will not appreciate you coming in the house after mud football.

### **Movie Days**

Another thing that is great for keeping the kids occupied is movie days. We will either get a bunch of Christmas movies or we will take a trip to the cinema. I know you are thinking that these may sound like expensive activities,

but they do not have to be. Most movie rental stores offer great deals where you can get like five movies for fives days for very cheap. And at the cinema I know my local ones during the holidays have a matinee showing of a older movie for only \$2 per person including adults.

Little girls love to watch ballet and theater during Christmas and there is sure to be one in your city too. If too much snow if a problem, have her friends over and play one of their fairytale Christmas movies. Popped corn is the simplest thing to make and they are going to love it!

And lastly, it is fun to help mommy sometimes! Lead the gang into the kitchen to help cut out the cookies or take up a cleaning task somewhere (the kids own rooms would be the biggest help). Mommy definitely wouldn't mind!

Overall the way I see it - the best way to survive the lead up to Christmas with your kids is actually quite simple. Have fun with them. I know that they can drive you crazy, but that is only because they are so excited for Christmas day. So channel that excitement in fun activities for you to do together.

*“The best part about snow fights is building a snow fort. If your family is anything like mine however, snow fights are great until someone takes it too far and it ends up with someone getting hurt.”*



**(NC)—With festive window displays, attractive sales and shopping bags overflowing with gifts, it can be tempting to splurge during the holiday season and take on too much debt. TD Canada Trust gives tips on how to avoid the spending habit that haunts many people well into the New Year:**

**Review your past splurges**

- Take a look at your online transactions history or bank statements from last year to get a better idea of how much you spent and what you bought during the holidays. If you used a credit card and carried a debt, figure out how long it took you to pay it off. If holiday shopping left a dent in your wallet, you may want to rethink your spending strategy this year.

**Make a list, and check it twice**

– Before you hit the malls, set a budget and make a holiday shopping list. Avoid impulse buying when tempted by catchy displays and alluring deals that may sway you from your list. Remember it's the thought that counts, so look for meaningful gifts that won't end up at the back of the closet.

**Make a plan**

– First, figure out how much you can afford to spend on parties this season. Think about the events you attended and hosted last year and look through your old bank statements to get a rough figure on how much you spent. You may be surprised at what you find.

**Set a budget**

– Create a budget for what you can realistically afford and don't forget to include incidentals like host/hostess gifts and taxis. Jump online to check



## Avoid a Holiday Spending Hangover

prices and set aside extra funds to cushion for unexpected expenses. If you're hosting a party this year, understanding how much you have to spend and the true cost of things will help you decide whether to throw a cookie exchange, intimate dinner party or a big soiree.

**Look for creative ways to cut costs**

– If the party is at your house, consider a potluck dinner and look to your garden for natural, evergreen decorations like

holly and pinecones. If you're attending a party and searching for a gift to bring the host, consider using your credit cards rewards points to find a suitable present instead of spending cash.

**Start stashing cash now**

– Even if you don't have a lot of money to save, start small, be diligent and it will add up. If you haven't done so already, consider setting up an automatic transfer of a portion of your pay check into a savings account.

# 25 Gorgeous Christmas Wreaths that Inspire

Christmas décor begins right at the door! Let these beautiful crowns made of natural and artificial holiday materials inspire you to create your own welcoming creations for Christmas.



## Fresh Fruit Wreaths

Celebrate the abundance of nature this Christmas by making a Colonial style wreath with real or artificial fruits.

Scarlet pomegranates, rich red berries, luscious apples, yellow limes and bright orange citruses complement the green boxwood, pine, fir or cedar base of the wreaths beautifully.

Add a long, wide velvet ribbon in burgundy to complete the extravagance.





## Dried Fruit Wreaths

The Christmas wreath is an essential element of holiday decorating. Fragrant and long lasting, wreaths made using dried fruits are as alluring as those made with fresh fruits.

The best part about making a wreath using dried-up fruits that you end up having the most original wreath as you will be using what's on hand and what is easily available.

Fruits like pomegranates and berries can be dried whole and attached to the wreath using florist's wire or a hot glue gun.

Fruits like oranges can be sliced and then dried which gives you many more ways to use them in wreaths. You can string them into a garland and then use them in wreaths.

Adding nuts and spices like walnuts and cinnamon sticks not only adds a rustic flavor to the wreaths, but also to their fragrance.

Dried fruit wreaths are generally made over an evergreen wreath base, but a wreath formed completely of dried fruit and sans any fresh greens also looks spectacular.

A dried artichoke makes a beautiful center for any winter wreath.



*The circular form of the Christmas wreath symbolizes eternity, continuity and the cycle of life. It also represents the sun, light and hope.*

## Green Wreaths

Adorned with Fresh and Dried Fruit and Other Festive Materials like Ornaments



## Green Wreaths

Winter greens can look gorgeous even without any ornamental additions. A lush wreath of boxwood, magnolia or pine looks stunning in its simple and rustic beauty.

### Add Green Plant Materials

You can vary the greens to create a more interesting look by adding green colored materials like apples, limes, dried artichokes and lotus pods. You can also mix different shades of foliage to create a richer, denser green wreath.

### Vary the Shades of Green

Neon green Chartreuse or Reindeer lichen (or moss) is a great addition to all green wreaths that could use a variation of green shades. Another way of getting a show-stopper green wreath is to add peacock feathers.



## Berry Wreaths

Lavish bunches of red berries make exquisite wreaths. They provide a bright burst of color and are best displayed on white doors and windows.

### Both Classic and Modern

The use of naturally available material and the monochromatic look at the same time, makes berry wreaths suitable for both traditional and modern Christmas decor.

### Monochromatic Wreaths

Although the word 'Berry Christmas Wreath' brings to mind a red wreath, you can make monochromatic wreaths using berries of different colors such as white, green, violet etc.



## White and Silver Wreaths

Subtly modern, silver-toned wreaths look best on Black painted doors.

Adorn a plain wreath with white and silver baubles or silver painted decorations. Silver painted twigs will give your wreath a very chic and modern look.

If using pine cones or pine boughs for the wreaths, buy or make them look snow-covered to blend their colors into the toned down color scheme.

Extra wide, silver ribbon will finish off the look with panache.

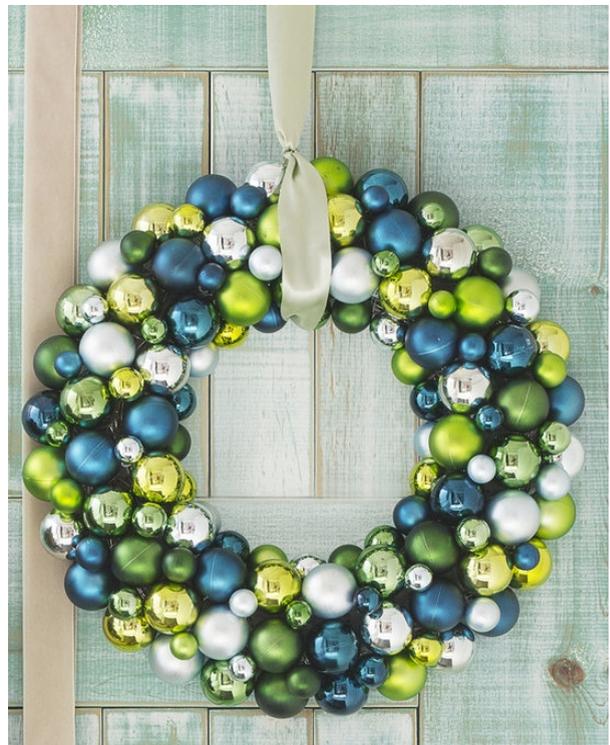
## Bauble Wreaths

Christmas Baubles are the next most popular materials to make wreaths after winter evergreens. Nothing says Christmas quite like these shiny, round ornaments originally intended for the Christmas tree, but who end up filling bowls and vases in all shapes to make a house look festive.

Choose shiny baubles in your Christmas colors or co-ordinate them with the paint in your house or the color on the door you plan to hang them on.

### Attaching Baubles to the Wreath

Use florist's wire to attach them to the wreath if you want to open the wreath up, later, and re-use them. If you want to have a permanent wreath, that you are sure you will use again and again, you can use a glue gun to attach them to the wreath base.





## Star Shaped Wreaths

The star is another shape and symbol that is synonymous with Christmas. A lovely twist on the traditional round Christmas wreaths would be to use a star shaped wreath form to make it. As we mentioned before, you do not need to purchase a base. You can get a little crafty and make your own base using wire or even cardboard.

Once you have the base ready, you can make your wreath as traditional or as modern as would go with your décor. Cover the base with greens or moss and add decorations like flowers, pine cones, baubles, berries, ribbons etc.



## Themed Wreaths

Give a modern twist to the traditional Christmas wreaths by building them around a theme. It could be a hobby, a place, something special that happened this year etc.

**Left:**

A Poker themed wreath welcomes visitors on the door. Playing cards are glued around the circumference of the wreath.

**Below:**

A seaside home displays its heritage with pride. Large conches and sea shells are hot glued to a semi-circular wreath form covered in greens. The pretty, red roses are strategically placed on the white shells.



## Square Wreaths

Lavender lovers will love this wreath for its fragrance, simplicity and subtle colors. The sage green ribbon does not take away from the subdued colors of this fashionably square wreath.

Whether you use traditional or modern materials to make a wreath, building it on a square base makes it suitable for both traditional and contemporary decorating styles. Because of the simple elements used, it will also sit pretty in a rustic setting.

A square wreath can be created using a square wreath form which can be easily created at home using wire or cardboard.

Below:

### **Berry Square**

This lush wreath combines the elegance of both, a berry wreath and a square wreath.





### **Ring-a-Ring of Peppers**

A Wreath made of Chili Peppers perks up a stark winter landscape during the Holidays.



## **Unusual Wreaths**

Nothing is too unusual when it comes to making wreaths. Depending upon what you have on hand, you can craft a lovely wreath in no time.

The fiery, red Chili peppers make for a festive arrangement above.

### **Feather Wreath**

This feather wreath, on the other hand, makes a more subtle statement. The unusual choice of materials and color, sets it apart from the rest and lends it a style matched by few other wreaths.

### **Versatility**

It would be completely at ease in a modern apartment as it would, on a barn door.



Photo: Tony Alter



## Monochromatic Wreath

Where else, but in Colonial Williamsburg can a wreath, this beautiful, be found. A beautiful red on red wreath with chilies, berries, pomegranates – all things good that come in reds!

## Snickers Wreath

A Gift wreath made of Snickers bars, perfect for anyone on your gift list with a sweet tooth. The wreath base has been wrapped with green ribbon and the chocolates and silk roses are attached with double sided tape.



## *A Silk Ivy pot gets a Makeover for Christmas*

### **What you need:**

Artificial/Silk Small-leaf,  
Potted Trailing Ivy Plant  
Florist Wire  
Ribbon  
Optional – Pine cones or  
acorns

3. Bring the long branches together at the top and tie them together using florist wire.

4. Now, take your ribbon and fold it from the middle to make a bow covering the florist wire.

5. Weave the lengths of the ribbon around the wreath taping them at the bottom.

6. You can create a similar wreath using fresh ivy, but you will need a wire frame for it to stand in shape.

### **How To:**

1. Gather all the branches of the ivy and split into two halves.

2. Take the longest strands of ivy from each side and lift them up.



# Gorgeous Fruit Centerpieces



Arrange fruits on attractive platters and tuck in winter greens and a few ornaments to make stunning centerpieces

Spice up the Citrus by decorating Oranges with cloves. Add cookies to complete this heavenly fragranced edible table centerpiece.





## Smaller Arrangements

While abundant arrangements look beautiful, you can also perk up little spaces with a petite centerpiece or decorative accent made using fruits and spices.

Cloves can be used to stud apples and citrus fruits creating lovely patterns for display. Place individually decorated fruit or arrange them in shallow baskets with seasonal greens, fruits and pinecones.

Weave string in between the petals of star anise to hold them to an orange. Wound the string through the length of the fruit and then weave through another star anise, creating a lovely garland all over the orange. Other spices such as cinnamon sticks also looks beautiful to complete the arrangement.





## *Giant Christmas Baubles*

An Easy Way to Create to Quickly Create Large Decorative Accents for Christmas Party Décor

**Covering foam balls with colorful aluminum foil is a great way to create gorgeous, giant-sized Christmas baubles for a quick centerpiece or party decorations.**

***What you will need:***

Printed Aluminum Foil Wrappers  
Foam Balls or other spheres  
Metallic or Plastic Screw  
Bottle Caps  
Glue



Aluminum foil is available in different colors and patterns at any baking, chocolate or candy making supply store. Foam balls are easy and convenient to handle, but almost any spherical shaped

object will do, for this project.

**How to:**

1. Cover the ball with foil. You might require 2-5 sheets depending upon the size of your ball. Press the foil to keep shape. When fully covered, glue the edges shut.
2. Glue bottle caps on top.
3. You can drill holes to create wire hangers if you wish to hang these.

# *Christmas Tree Decorating*

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## Christmas Countdown Advent Planner

*Advent calendars are very popular at Christmas, but they can also be a great way to help you plan for the big day. Here's how.*

### What you need:

You need two felt pieces, one red and one green, 25 Christmas gift cards (or scraps of craft paper), a piece of dowel, a piece of red ribbon

and some basic sewing skills.

### Optional:

A salvaged Skiing Santa from a stocking has been used to add some jazz to the calendar. You can use any Christmas motif you have on hand, or simply skip this part and create the calendar pockets.

### No Sew:

Many wonderful products such as fabric glue are now

available at all stores. You can easily make this project even if you are not into sewing.

### How to:

Cut the green felt the size you want your calendar to be. This would depend on whether or not, you are using an extra motif (like the Santa in our advent calendar) on the left.

You could either sew wide straps like in the picture above, or just hem one side of

the green felt so you can slide the dowel through.

The dowel should be 1 inch wider than the towel. Tie the ribbon to each end of the dowel so you can hang up the felt calendar.

Cut the red felt into 25 squares just a little bigger than the gift cards. Sew the squares to the green felt using blanket stitch. Or if you would rather not sew, glue them using a fabric glue, taking care to glue only the edges.



Slip a gift card into each pocket. Or if you are a crafter and have a stash of pretty patterned paper lying in your drawer, use them instead.

**Now comes the fun part – write on each gift card the day's tasks in your Christmas planner.**

Here are some ideas to get you started, but remember they can be adapted and swapped around

to suit your own Christmas traditions.

### The 25 Day Christmas Planner

1: Put up the outdoor decorations and the door wreath. If the tree is artificial, it can be put up.

2: Put up the indoor decorations and decorate the tree.

3: Shop for small bedside gifts if you have guests staying for Christmas.

Beautifully wrapped soaps, novels or magazines for bedtime reading, and special candles are all thoughtful notions.

4: Check your first aid and bathroom supplies. Stock up on headache tablets and tummy soothers!

5: Put away anything precious that might get broken or damaged during the Christmas celebrations and replace them with bowls full

of glittering Christmas tree ornaments, bright candles and a nativity scene.

6: Check your supplies of non-perishable items, such as cookies and canned goods, and make a list to stock up.

7: Check supplies of non-alcoholic wine, wine and spirits, and make a list to stock up. If you are making mulled wine or punch, check your spice supplies.

8: Check battery supplies. Make a list to stock up on most common batteries that may be needed, such as AA and Triple A.

9: Check cameras, empty digital camera cards where necessary. Stock up on film, cards or batteries to make sure you can capture those Christmas memories!

10: Start getting in the Christmas groove. Get out your Christmas music and movies and stack them round the TV. Shop for a new Christmas movie to entertain the kids during the countdown.

11: Start planning your Christmas menu. Make a list of ingredients you will need. Print out menu, decorated with Christmas clip art, on the computer.

12: Stock up on Christmas wrap, gift cards and ribbon. Start wrapping gifts you already have purchased.

13: Put your feet up, have some hot chocolate and watch a movie!

14: Start planning your hair and outfit. Book into a salon, or have a spa day at home. Pamper hair, nails and feet – especially feet!

15: Check the freezer for Christmas stocks and make a list to stock up. Buy important foods

16: Plan Christmas flower arrangements. Order fresh flowers and greenery, or shop for dried or silk flowers.

17: Check your supplies of glasses, serving plates and cutlery. Stock up if you need extra. Don't forget to stock up on plastic glasses and paper plates for small guests.

18: Buy Christmas bon bons, before they all sell out!

19: Check your gift list and make sure everyone is included. Shop for gifts if you have missed anyone. Don't leave it to the last minute

when the good stock will have run out.

20: Time to prepare baked treats like cookies, shortbread and mince pies that will keep. Store them in tins in a cool dry place.

21: Set aside a day to help the kids with gifts they can make themselves – felt spectacle cases, decorated tins for storing pencils, framed photos for doting grandparents.

22: Plan your Christmas dinner table. Give it a dry run to make sure everything looks the way you want it.

There is still time to make last minute adjustments or purchases.

23: Do last minute baking – meringues, cakes and biscuits. Put the turkey and other large frozen goods in the fridge to start defrosting.

24: Do all your last minute shopping, including for perishables to last over the holiday such as fresh bread, fruit and vegetables. To calm kids at bedtime, put on some soothing ambient or classical music. Don't forget to leave a treat for Santa!

25: Merry Christmas!

## 5 Apps to get you Through Holiday Hum-Drum

(NC) - It's that time of year again. Time for holiday shopping, complete with overcrowded malls, long lines, excited children and jingle bells on repeat. To help make the horror a little more bearable, Motorola has handpicked five mobile apps to keep you entertained while you're waiting for your loved one to pick up those last few items on the wish list:

### 1. Bubble Blast Holiday:

Take charge of the season. Bubble Blast Holiday is a puzzle game in which you burst Christmas characters to trigger a chain reaction in order to eliminate them. See if your highscore can beat the elves.

### 2. Dream Holiday:

Take a relaxing tropical trip on a river full of exotic boats. Enjoy the natural meditation and calming beauty of natural landscape. You'll forget you're stuck in a stuffy mall and drift away – virtually, of course.

### 3. Smartactions:

Peace of mind can be yours this holiday. Whether you want to maximize your last ounce of power, auto-reply with a text message when you're driving, or prevent your phone from ringing at night or during a meeting, this new app can help. It works by automatically triggering specific actions, based on things like time of day, location, battery levels and more. Smartactions is

pre-installed on many Motorola devices, like the Razr HD LTE.

### 4. Millionaire City Holiday:

Earn your riches and build your company from the ground up. Welcome to Millionaire City, where your holiday dreams can come true as you become a powerful CEO and watch the money roll in from the convenience of your Android phone.

### 5. Gifts Ultimate:

Organize and budget all of your holiday shopping with this easy-to-use app. Keep track of individual and total budgets, enter gifts as they are purchased and ensure you have money left over to celebrate the new year in style.

**(NC) - For many Canadians, holiday home décor hinges on one very special tradition: the Christmas tree. Nothing symbolizes the spirit of the season better than spruce, pine or fir branches decked out in lights, ornaments and other festive embellishments.**

According to Shelli Gardner, cofounder and CEO of crafting and décor company Stampin' Up!, the beauty of Christmas trees is that no two are alike. People decorating a tree have endless opportunities to get inspired, she says, especially with exciting new trends to watch in 2012.

“From classic decorations that have been passed down for generations, to trendy modern-day ornaments, there are countless ways to put a unique touch on a Christmas tree,” says Gardner, “it all depends on individual taste. I'm a big fan of handmade ornaments, which are becoming more and more popular. They're an exciting and creative way to put a personal touch on your tree this year, whether you're a beginner or a more experienced crafter.”

### **Add a Taste of the Past**

Centuries ago, celebrants draped their Christmas tree branches in edible decorations like fruits, nuts, popcorn and cookies. These all-natural trinkets eventually gave way to the glass, plastic and wood ornaments that are most commonly used today.

This year, why not bring the



## Inspiring Ideas for Your Christmas Tree

past to the present by adding a rustic touch to your tree with ornaments made of dried fruit and spices? You could make ornaments with dried oranges, cloves and cinnamon sticks, as well as homemade decorative lanterns created with twigs, fruits and wires.

### **Add a Personal Touch**

Handmade ornaments created with cardstock, ribbon, punches and other accessories can have a definite 'wow' factor, with the added benefit of being truly one-of-a-kind.

Crafting companies like Stampin' Up! have introduced kits and coordinating accessories that make it easier than ever to create stunning decorations at home.

For example, the nine-piece Ornament Keepsake Stamp set includes a variety of festive ornament-shaped stamp designs that coordinate with punches, ribbons, and other embellishments. Using a red or green ink pad, simply stamp the ornament shapes onto white paper, cut them using the Holiday Ornaments Framelits Dies, add some scalloped tulle ribbon and glittery embellishments, and let your creative juices flow.

For expert guidance, consider gathering a group and participating in a holiday ornament party. Independent Stampin' Up! demonstrators in communities across Canada, hold parties designed to help build crafting skills. You can find a local demonstrator online at [www.stampinup.ca](http://www.stampinup.ca).



## Eco-Friendly Gift Wrapping Ideas

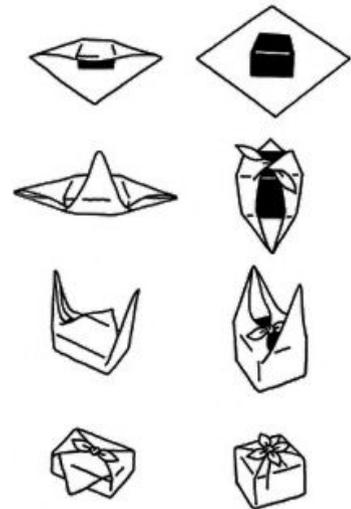
*Christmas Gift Wrapping has always been considered an art and creative minds are forever busy coming up with new ideas to wrap their gifts. This year, however, let us all think differently and add the feature of 'responsibility' to our wraps. A responsibility towards the environment.*

Two beautiful, green ways of wrapping your gifts this year are to use re-usable fabric wraps and recycle brown paper found around your house.

### Furoshiki

Let's do as the Japanese do!  
The Japanese art of Furoshiki

is a lovely way to wrap a gift. Here are two basic folds for rectangular and square shaped gifts:



### Brown Paper Gift Wrap

Brown paper gift wraps are not a new idea but they are mostly avoided because we fail to make them pretty. Embellish your brown paper wrapped gifts with scraps of handmade paper and matching ribbon. Use your Christmas colors and you will find out how versatile brown paper wrap can be.





## Gift Ideas When You Are the Secret Santa

***(NC) - It's that time of year – you're buying presents for friends, family, and that one quiet guy at the office. Office gift exchanges often mean you're shopping for people you barely know. To help, the staff from Canada's largest bargain hunting site, RedFlagDeals.com, have put together some Secret Santa tips:***

### **Boss:**

Buying presents for your boss can be awkward. Choose a meaningful gift instead of something fancy or expensive. Fun gifts like a

framed photo from a work event or a batch of gourmet cookies to share are a good start.

### **Receptionist:**

If there's one thing a receptionist has enough of, it's office supplies. Skip the stationery and treat them to a deluxe gift basket, a gift certificate to the local salon for a manicure/pedicure combo or a good book.

### **New Person:**

This one is tougher. Keep an eye on what the new person likes to eat. If they come into the office every day with a large coffee, put together a

nice mug, a coffee shop gift certificate and some chocolate-covered espresso beans for the ultimate gift.

### **Intern:**

Usually "intern" is a code word for "underpaid". Skip the gag gifts and get your intern something useful like movie passes.

### **IT/Help Desk:**

Treat the people who fix your computer well. Something like a gift certificate to their favorite restaurant will work. If you want to be more creative, observe what they decorate their desk with and get them something that fits in.



# Outdoor Christmas Lights

*Christmas is not too far away now and if, like us, you approach the seasonal holiday with excitement and enthusiasm, then what better way to share that with the neighbors than putting on a great display of outdoor Xmas lights?*

**C**hristmas is a

joyous occasion which can be enjoyed by parents and children too, in fact the whole family, and is traditionally a time to relax, to eat and drink, and to welcome friends and family into the home, to share the happy time. Even people who don't, as a rule, actually celebrate Xmas, often join in the fun anyway. After all, it's a time for everyone, right? Not only that, but there are other things to think about too such as your outdoor decorated Christmas tree and maybe a few decorations on the lawn too, for added effect

***After all, if your house is not lit up during Christmas, how will Santa and his reindeer find your house?***

## **Tips to Illuminate your Home this Christmas**

OK, the first thing you need to do is PLAN what you are going to do, if you see my point. Often Christmas lights, if they are used each year and not brand new from the store, will be stored away in the crawl space in the roof, or the

cellar or maybe even in the garage.

Now is the time to get them out, but wait before you hang them.

Lights are of course electric and therefore a potential hazard, so make sure you unfurl your lights and check for any breaks in the wires (Rats and other vermin can chew the wires), and make sure no bulbs are missing.

Then BEFORE you go and hang them, plug them in and check they work! You would be surprised how many people spend days and days hanging the lights on the roof, down the walls etc, only to find they don't work! Can you imagine the disappointment?



So to avoid this, thoroughly check them for faults, and then you are ready to go.

## **Hanging your Lights**

With reference to a point we made earlier, make sure SAFETY is your primary concern, after all, who wants to spend the holiday season in hospital?

Planning is the key to saving you time, and maybe saving your neck, when putting up Xmas lights, so make sure you look at some sort of plan, even if it is only a few notes written on one side of paper, make sure you know what you are doing, and what lights go where.

It is usually best to start at the top and work down, so its up on the roof maybe, and get that illuminated Santa and his sleigh up, maybe putting lights around the chimney too.

A big word of warning again, your roof is high up! Shingles or roof tiles can be slippery, and from the tip of the roof, to the road below, is a LONG way down. If you are not confident, (or some sort of "Spider-man"), there are various contractors with the right equipment and experience on working at

heights that can help you set your Christmas display up, often at a fairly low cost.

### **Hanging your Lights on the Wall and Sorting out the Garden**

Once the lights are up on the roof, you can then move down to a safer place and start to hang on the walls. Make sure that if your home is not clad in wooden siding but brick, that the lights will be fixed safely but in a way that will allow you to take them down once the festive season has come to and end.

If you have a Christmas tree you planted one year in the garden then you have the ideal tree to hang your lights on, but if not, you can buy artificial Christmas trees and then decorate them as you like.

If your neighborhood often has snow during this time, make sure all electrical cables are shielded from any water or damp getting into them because they will break the fuse if water gets into them and you could be left with no electric on Christmas day!

### **Some More Ideas**

A Theme:

Go for a theme or make sure all your separate parts of the display work well visually with each other. A Candyland theme, for example, attracts kids like no other. Similarly, a lit up nativity display is a wonderful way to decorate your yard for Christmas.

White Lights:

Sometimes people abandoned the idea of colored lights and just

go for white, which can bring a lovely "clean" feel to the display, but it's up to you what you do, it's your house; Remember sometimes, "less is more."

Pre-lit Shapes:

Pre-lit wreaths, trees and other festive shapes like the sleigh or snowmen are easy to install and display. They make a statement if you are willing to throw in some extra bucks for decorations.

If you study the tips above, and you are confident in putting up this year holiday lights display, you could be the envy of the street. Just take care to not overdo it and make the display too cluttered.

Finally, stand back and admire your hard work, and have a very happy Christmas indeed!

## Southern Pecan Pie with Whipped Cream



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



Handmade for Christmas

## *O Christmas Tree*

The Christmas Tree with its beautiful slanting branches has always been a beloved symbol of Christmas. It would be difficult to come across a kids' drawing on the theme of Christmas without a lovely Christmas tree sitting pretty in there.

This year, we use this evergreen Christmas motif to inspire our Handmade Christmas cards. Getting creative with the razor-edged triangle shape that is so popular in Christmas crafts, we have come up with unusual ways to use it in our cards.

Now, creative never means 'difficult', mind you. All the projects are easy enough for beginners who will enjoy creating hand-crafted gifts to give to their friends and family without fussing over advanced paper crafting techniques.



## *Christmas Tree in Winter Woods*

*With a little creativity and a few scraps of Christmas patterned paper, you can dress up a lovely card for Christmas.*

### **What you will need:**

- 1 Notecard/Card Blank
- 1 Background paper in light blue, preferably depicting a snowy theme
- 4 Scraps of green paper in different patterns
- 1 Strip of brown paper for the trunk

### **How To:**

1. Glue the winter patterned paper to your blank notecard.
2. Using the picture of the finished card as a guide, cut out similar shapes from the different patterned papers in green color for the tree.
3. Glue them as shown, to form the tree.
4. Glue the little strip of brown paper in place to form the trunk. We used a little piece of a brown quilling strip.
5. Stamp or write your greetings on the inside of the card.



**You will need:**

- Brown Notecard
- Green patterned paper for the Trees
- Strip of Red and Green paper

We used a scrapbooking paper with a Christmas tree print to cut out the trees. However, you can use any green patterned paper and cut them in long triangles to make trees of varying patterns.



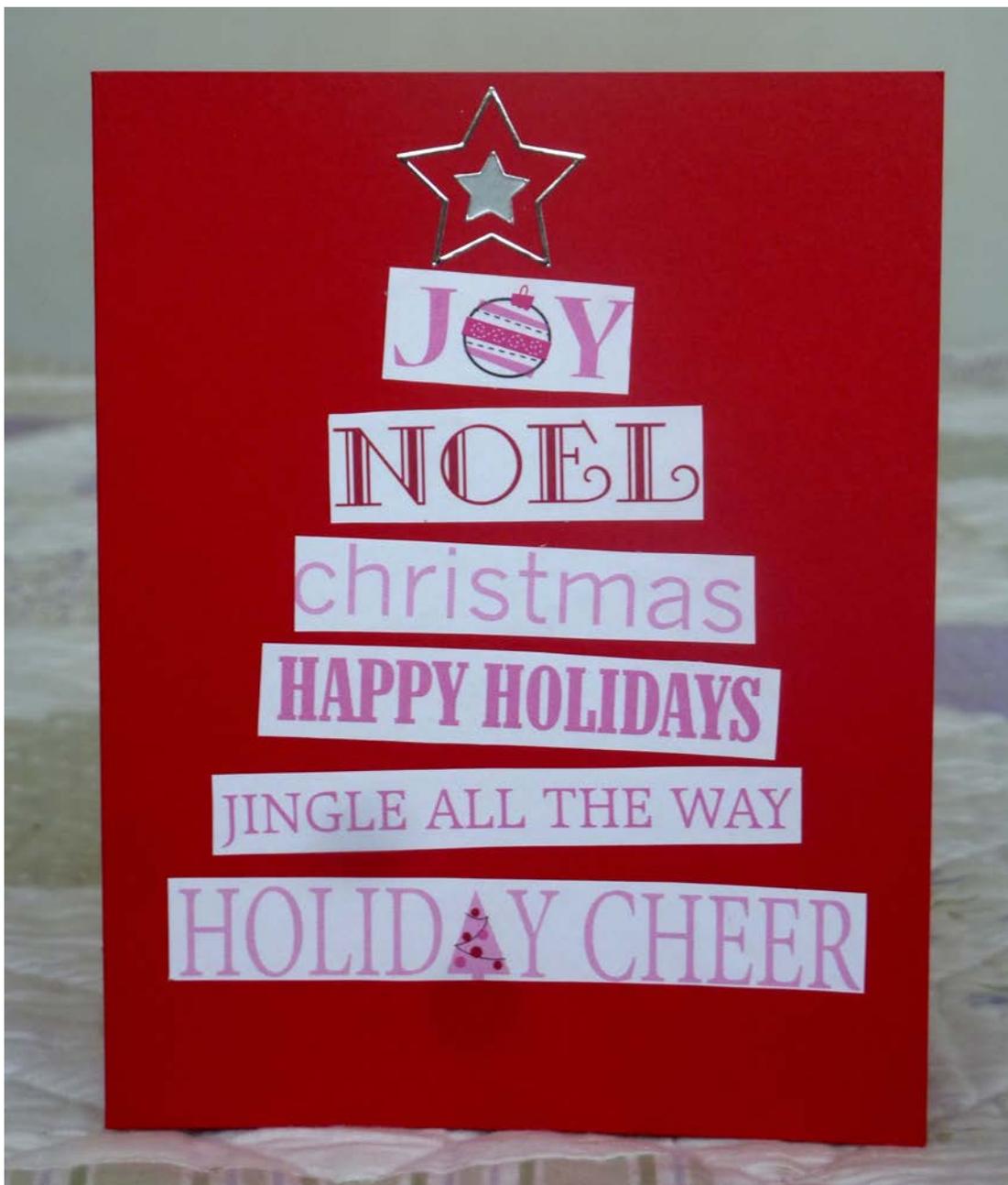
**How To:**

Cut out 3 tree shapes and glue them to the card. Glue the red and green strip to the base of the trees.

# *Festive Christmas Trees*

*A Row of Christmas trees, all aglow with ornaments and lights make for a lovely handmade Christmas card.*





## Christmas Wishes Tree

Scrapbooking stores are filled with sheets printed with Christmas wishes lettering. All you have to do with one such sheet is to cut out the words and form a Christmas tree out of it!

A star outline sticker forms the tree topper on this card made on red cardstock.





## *Modern, Minimalist Christmas Tree*

A very modern twist to the traditional Christmas tree motif

### **Material Required:**

- *Teal Blue Notecard*
- *Quilling strips in Gold and Cream*
- *Star Sticker*
- *Glue*

### **How To:**

1. Hold the two quilling strips together and glue one end where the tree would end.



2. Using the image above as a guide, form the tree by folding, gluing and turning the strips (always holding them together) to the top. The folds will shorten/narrow down each time.

3. Stick the star sticker on top. You can do this in as many color variations as you want. A great idea would be to make the cards in your chosen Christmas colors.



## Starry Christmas Tree

*This gorgeous gold and blue card is very simple to create. Outline stickers in star shape have been glued together to form a Christmas tree shape. A larger star makes the tree topper and a strip of golden paper makes the trunk. A classy and bright Christmas card made in minutes!*

# *I Love to Craft*

## *Do You?*



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# Coloring Pages

## Keep the Kids Busy!

Print out these coloring pages and hand the kids a pack of crayons.

They will get busy getting creative with their artistic skills and you will find some extra time to tick a chore off the Holiday checklist or get a shut-eye!



# Homemade Ornaments for Baby's First Christmas

*The first Christmas after a baby is born is a unique celebration for the infant, but it is always a special time for the parents, siblings, grandparents, and other extended relatives of a newborn child.*

Every parent wants to commemorate their child's first Christmas in a warm and sentimental way. Following are five precious and touching ideas for commemorating your baby's first Christmas. One for each little "piggy."



## Baby Clothing

Infants and toddlers experience more growth during their first year at a more rapid pace than any other time in their lives. If Baby was born in the spring or late winter (perhaps even in the early fall!) there should be tiny socks, booties, and mittens that have been outgrown. Fill these items

with inexpensive cotton batting, seal the tops with some whip-stitching or fabric glue, sew or glue on a ribbon, and decorate the entire tree (or perhaps just the one in the nursery) with the ornaments. These diminutive items have a gigantic impact when displayed together in this way.

## Birth Announcement

Frame the birth announcement to use as an ornament or wall-hanging. It could also be

laminated, hole-punched, and looped on a ribbon for easy hanging on the tree.

## Greeting Cards

Many of the cards received at baby showers are beautiful. Cut off the fronts of the cards that did not have any writing on the back of the front panel. Use a hole

punch to create a hole in the top center of the card, loop some ribbon through, and hang the baby shower cards as ornaments on your Christmas tree. Try to keep them clear of your Christmas tree lights for safety's sake.

## Handprint Ornaments

Using either paper and paint or a pre-made plaster kit, preserve tiny fingers and toes in a footprint or handprint ornament.

## Keepsake Glass Globe

Find a clear glass globe ornament if possible. If a clear one can not be found, remove the cap and rinse out the inside of one of the colored ones with white vinegar to remove the paint. If color removal was necessary, rinse the inside of the glass ball thoroughly and allow it to air dry. Fill the ball with wee keepsakes, such as the child's hospital bracelet, umbilical cord clip, first hair bow, a button from the going-home outfit. In years to come, it is possible that the glass globe will need to be stored on a high shelf for display, for safety's sake.

Metal ornament hooks are not recommended, as there will be curious hands reaching for the tree this year and for years to come.

Any of these ideas for homemade Christmas ornaments would also serve as touching and tender gifts for the first celebration of the birth of the Christ child for someone else's little lamb.

# *Eight Decorating Ideas for a Festive Table*

## **Add a Natural Element**

*Mix in seasonal flowers and foliage with your fine China and watch your table take an inimitable style of its own. This place setting is inspired from the leafy design on the rim of the plates used. A ring of leaves makes a creative place mat and a beautiful napkin ring. Glue leaves to a wire wreath form and inexpensive wooden napkin rings to make your own table decorations.*



## **Classic is Festive**

*Striving to be different every year is a sign of a creative mind, but sometimes, sticking to the traditional colors of Christmas makes your table look most festive. Go back to the classics and decorate your Christmas dinner table in holiday reds.*





### **Gold and Gild**

*Gilded Chargers, gold painted table decorations and a glowing golden ribbon is all you need to create an impressive Christmas table. Use various shades from bright and dull gold to copper and use white dinnerware for maximum effect. Golden baubles and strings of beads add a lot of drama to an otherwise simple table. A plain tablecloth can be perked up with some golden confetti.*

### **Add Homespun Touches**

*Add handmade details to your Christmas table decorations. You can use paper punches on starched fabric. Thin and stiff fabric like voile or cotton works best. Cut out rectangular placemats from fabric and punch out designs to make them festive. You can also cut out holiday shapes from thick patterned paper like the reindeer design above and glue them to your napkin rings.*



**Adding your own special touch will make your table stand out from all other cookie-cutter decorations.**

## Winter Blues

*Set a table in the wintery shades of blue this. Mix different shades of blue and add touches of green with seasonal tree branches.*

*Add snowflake shaped decorations to complete the winter look. Paper snowflakes made at home can also be used over the place mats or for adorning the napkins or favors.*



## Use What You Have

*No color is unsuitable for holiday decorations. You only need to jazz up your existing tableware to make it festive.*

*Purple is a favorite with Christmas decorating enthusiasts. You can use your year-round purple table runners and napkins, pair them with white China and add special elements like a sparkling beaded napkin ring to decorate your Christmas table.*

*Embellishing what you already have is the best budgeting tip ever!*



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## **Sparkle Your Whites**

*There is a thin line between boring white and festive whites. Turn a stark white table into a sparkling festive table by adding a touch of glimmer.*

*Choose white tablecloths with metallic print. You can also upgrade a simple white tablecloth with silver confetti snowflakes. Jewelry with large white or icy blue rhinestones looks great on napkin rings.*

*Place floating candles in clear or etched glasses. Complete the look by adding clear or silver baubles as place cards. Strands of silver or white beads on a mirrored surface will add to the elegance of a white table.*

## **Luxurious Colors and Fabric**

*If Red and Green are a little too strong for your tastes, you can opt for metallic and jewel colors and get the same luxurious look that befits a winter holiday table.*

*Choose rich fabrics like silk blends, damask and taffeta and you will never go wrong.*

*Beautiful embroidered silk table linen from China and India is widely available in the stores and makes for a lovely backdrop for all your lush decorations.*



# The writing is on the wall

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## Look Elegant for Christmas Dinners *The French Way!*

Marie-Anne Lecoer, author of Amazon Best-seller 'How to be Chic and Elegant' shares with 'Celebrating Christmas Magazine' her tips for dressing up elegantly this Holiday season...

French women are renowned for understatement, but quality in their style. They opt for classic and simple styles on every occasion. That way, less can go wrong.

They go for understated pieces, in clean lines. They do not wear anything that makes them look sleazy or trashy. They favor great style over trend. They like to let their own personality shine through their ensemble, so never go overboard on pattern, motif or color. They stick to classic colors that compliment each other and never go out of fashion.

If they own genuine pearls, diamonds, silk scarves and designer jackets, they will wear these pieces for important occasions, such as Christmas.

**French women follow three rules when it comes to style:**

'Less is more'  
'Keep it simple'  
'Quality not quantity'

If you wish to emulate a French woman's style for Christmas, I recommend the following pieces:

**A black knee-length dress** in a classic cut - or other color.

**A pretty cardigan** or little jacket to keep on for the evening - if needed  
**A colored or patterned scarf**, silk preferred - if needed.

**Black or silver shoes** with a heel, never super high.

**Black or silver bag** - If the rest of your outfit is simple with no pattern, go for a statement, but still tasteful, handbag.

**Your best authentic/real jewelry** - no plastic or obviously cheap baubles - pearls are favorites

**Your best perfume** - not 'eau de cologne' from the supermarket.

***On this occasion, as you will be the host, you need to wear an outfit that is both stylish and comfortable.***

You will be pretty busy as a host so the last thing you need is to have to worry about your outfit or having to adjust your top/skirt if they do not fit or behave as they should.

Your whole outfit has to be practical but stylish at the same time. This is not an easy feat. There are a few rules to keep in mind.

The points to remember are:

**The Do's:**

\* Do wear a dress - so easy to pull on in a hurry and no top that might ride up while you are busy

\* As you have to pare down the accessories and be careful of stains, you can opt for a patterned dress. That way, this will be the main piece, without the need for statement jewelry pieces. Keep everything else simple in color, design and size.

\* Wear your best jewelry but keep it to the minimum: not too long nor too many

\* Wear medium heeled shoes for comfort

\* Tie your hair up in a neat updo so that your hair is out of the way of the food you will prepare and serve

\* Be prepared - have a spare outfit to change into if, heaven forbid, there is a disaster in the kitchen

\* Keep your makeup on the light side - sliding makeup will not be appetizing to your guests

\* One last accessory you have to keep on at all times: your beautiful smile

## What To Wear When Hosting A Christmas Dinner At Your Own House?



*Tadashi Shoji One Shoulder Dress - Sequined Lace - \$328  
Shop Online at: [www.bloomingdales.com](http://www.bloomingdales.com)*

**The Don'ts:**

\* Whatever your outfit, dress or top/ skirt/ trousers, it must not be tight: you will need to move around and be comfortable all evening

\* Avoid wearing any dangly sleeves or jewelry so that they keep away from food, drinks and the gravy.

\* No super high heels as you will be walking around all evening serving and being the

perfect hostess. The last thing you want is a broken ankle or tripping in front of your guests!

\* No short skirt: not elegant enough for a hostess

\* Avoid wearing an outfit that might show up food or drinks stains

\* Resist the lure of wearing flashing novelty earrings: Let the Christmas tree be the centerpiece, not your ears.

***A good thing to remember is that you will go back to work and face your colleagues, and most importantly your boss, after your office party.***



## What To Wear To Office Parties & What NOT To Wear?

Therefore what you wear has to be acceptable for the occasion and fellow guests. You are representing not only yourself but, if you are out in public, your company or firm as well.

### **The Do's:**

\* Wear an outfit that shows your boss and colleagues that you

made an effort.

\* Wear an outfit that won't make you cringe with embarrassment the next morning or when seeing

the photographs.

\* By keeping in mind the three rules of chic and elegance: 'Less is more', 'Keep it simple' and 'Quality not quantity', you are more likely to get it just right.

### **The Don'ts:**

\* Anything deemed 'risqué' or too

revealing.

\* Low décolletage that will show more than your workmates may wish to see.

\* Thigh high hems that will reveal too much.

\* Skyscraper heels that will make you wobble and make people think that you are drunk.

\* Any piece of clothing sporting a slogan - only the wearer finds them clever

\* Sports clothes

\* Anything torn, whether designer or not

Lastly, decorum at all times. That does not mean that you can not enjoy yourself but you should act and behave like the lady you are. Let people remember you at the office party for all the right reasons.

### **Get the Look**

*Colorblocked Pleated Shell in 'Rich Verdigris' color - \$58*

*Stretch Crepe Pintuck Slim Leg Pants in Black - \$88*

*Art Deco Statement Necklace - \$98*

*Wide Rectangle Pyramid Stretch Bracelet - \$68*

*Foldover Nappa Leather Clutch in Black - \$98*

Shop this Look online at:  
[www.AnnTaylor.com](http://www.AnnTaylor.com)

## Which current trends are suitable for working into your Christmas party look?



*Deco Silk Oblong Scarf - \$68 Ann Taylor, Braided Belt - \$29.99 Mango, Stretch Baroque Skirt - \$158 Juicy Couture*

We have all had a peek at the various Fashion Weeks, whether held in Paris, London or New York. There are so many new trends for Fall/Winter seasons 2012. Many of them will not be suitable for the elegant Christmas you wish to have and it can be confusing as trends also vary between designers.

Therefore, I have selected a few easy trends which you can use for the Christmas party look:

- Shine
- Velvet
- Baroque pattern
- Bright belts
- Silk scarves

You can bring these trends into your outfit by adding accessories that will not cost you the earth. Trendy jewelry, shoes and handbags are easy pieces to bring in without updating your whole wardrobe. However, if money is no object, you can go all-out and buy a dress in a baroque pattern or in a velvet fabric.

**You can introduce the above trends into an outfit as below:**

Shiny detailing on fabric, jewelry, handbag or shoes will bring you up to trend at your party.

Velvet is also big this season, so you can invest in a velvet jacket or dress. What could be

more plush or sexy than red velvet at Christmas? But, don't go over the top and look like your grandmama's curtains (less is more).

Alternatively, a velvet clutch bag in a jewel colour will play the trend just as well.

The baroque influence can be brought in via a skirt or a pair of pants.

Bright belts are an inexpensive way to get up to date with the new look.

Tie a silk scarf around your neck instead of a knitted one to inject more chic into your outfit.

***One last word with trends: Do not wear them all at once!***

## For Those Not Into 'Trends', **Classic** Can Always Look **Best** Without Looking Outdated



Classics are so named because they do not seem to date as quickly as trendy pieces. Clothes that are classically cut have a timeless style that will always make you look good, no matter what.

A little black dress, simple jacket or blazer are classics which will take you anywhere, from your office party to your cocktail party and Christmas day itself. They are extremely versatile and no woman can do without them.

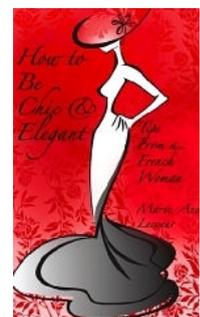
Accessorize them in a different manner for each occasion. Choose colorful accessories at your work party and silver or gold ones for Christmas day. Et voila.

Enjoy your parties and, best of all, Joyeux Noël!

Marie-Anne Lecoœur is the Author of the UK Best-seller 'How To Be Chic & Elegant - Tips from a French Woman' and 'Pear Shape Daywear Mini-Guide'.

She came to Jersey when she was 20 years old and has lived there ever since. She is married and has two sons, a stepson, an American bulldog called Indie and a chihuahua by the name of Coco.

Her [blog](#) and her book both are the perfect resources for practical styling tips to help women dress elegantly and a must-read for all.



# Christmas Cooking with Chef Micho

*Chef Micho Nicolas is known for his burning passion for anything to do with food. Christmas only takes this passion further! Here we bring you some of his fabulously festive recipes that are guaranteed to be a hit with all your guests.*



*Santa Claus Seducer*

## *Santa Claus Seducer*

Move the cookies and milk to the side, this recipe will get Santa out of his Sleigh and into your home. An elegant, yet simple entrée to get your Christmas party started with an exciting flavor combination.

**Ingredients Required:**



- 40 Crackers or pre-made walnut cake
- 1 Jar of Cream Cheddar Cheese
- 50 grams chopped sultanas (Dried Grapes)
- 50 Grams of finely chopped black olives
- 10 Large Strawberries
- 5 tablespoons of Vanilla Yoghurt Fresh Mint to Garnish
- 2 Sticks of Fresh Celery
- 2 Large Tomatoes (Optional) Sliced
- Artichoke hearts (Optional)

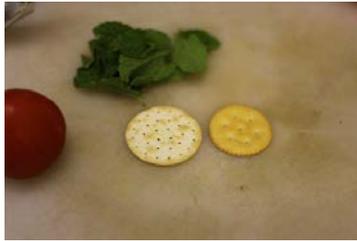
**Directions:**

1. Prepare your crackers or walnut cake. You can use any plain pre-made cake for a thick toast-like appearance.



This is a 3 day old cake that had 5 slices left, so with a cookie cutter, we made a circular shape.

2. Slice the strawberries and tomatoes as thin as you can.



The tomatoes are optional but strawberries are a great addition to this sweet and salty starter.



3. Finely chop the sultanas, celery and Olives.



4. Slice (not chop) the mint leaves finely so they look like shredded mint. With the cheddar cheese add the celery, olives and sultanas and mix well.

5. Prepare your crackers or cake and spoon the cheese mix on top. Add 2 slices of strawberries and one slice of tomato on top and a small dollop of yoghurt.



Garnish with the shredded mint. Display and serve.





# Cranberry Stuffed Pumpkin

*This recipe is a creation of color, love and sharing throughout the Christmas season.*

## Ingredients:

1 medium size Pumpkin / Squash  
2 Tbsp Butter  
¼ Teaspoon Sea Salt / Black Pepper  
1 (16 Ounce) can whole or Dried cranberry or fresh unsweetened Cherries (Variations available)  
100 grams dried apricots  
½ cup of Pecans / Pistachio / Walnuts or Mixed Nuts Crushed  
2 Tablespoons of dried basil  
1 Tablespoon of Vegetable Stock Powder

## Directions:

Prepare all your dry ingredients and chop or grind the nuts.



In this case, if you can't get fresh cranberries, you can use

dried cranberries if they are not in season.

Cut your squash or pumpkin in any shape you like and leave a well for your dry ingredients. Remove the seeds and wash.





Chop one onion and garlic to place inside the squash / pumpkin to boil like so..



Fill the pot to just cover the pumpkin / squash. Even fill the pumpkin with water to boil the garlic and onion. Boil for 20 minutes.



\* We don't want to cook the pumpkin, just infuse it with flavors.

Close the pumpkin lid and add your favorite preservative free stock powder (about 2 teaspoons).

Remove from boiling water, empty the water from the pumpkin and leave the garlic and onion inside.



Place it on a baking dish and fill with dried apricots and Cranberries. You can add stock powder if you wish too.



You can add the nuts on the top for a crunchy finish or underneath the cranberries.

Cover the pumpkin with its lid and spread butter all over the pumpkin.



Sprinkle your favorite herbs and spices all over the pumpkin. We just used dried basil and black pepper.



Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit, Bake for 60 Minutes. Check after 45 minutes for tenderness by sticking a fork into the skin.



And you end up with a deliciously fruity sweet pumpkin cranberry delight.

#### About Chef Micho Nicola



Experimental Chef Micho has been featured on Snapguide and runs his own food channel 'walaoehtv's Cook with Micho'. Catch his love for cooking live at [www.walaoehtv.com](http://www.walaoehtv.com), which is a very useful guide on cooking which illustrates that cooking is not a chore, but rather a way of expressing your love to others around you.



# Holly Crackle Kisses

Another eye-pleasing recipe by Chef Micho, this one is a colorful and the most crunchy treat that will have you wanting more kisses under the mistletoe.

## Ingredients:

½ cup (125 gm) Butter  
30 Large marshmallows /  
Marshmallow Paste  
1 – 2 teaspoons green food  
coloring  
4 cups of cornflakes cereal  
4 tablespoons of sliced  
almonds / nut mix  
Red cherries  
100 Grams Desiccated  
Coconut for Decoration

**Makes 36 pieces**

## Directions:

In a medium saucepan melt butter, marshmallows over medium – low heat stirring constantly.

When all is melted remove from heat and fold in the cornflakes, nuts, food coloring and vanilla.

Pick up one tablespoon at a time and place on non stick surface such as baking paper, decorate with glazed cherries.

Refrigerate for an hour and serve!

## Alternative Serving Idea





## Cranberry & Cream Cheese Braid

*This Festive Dessert Bread is a Wonderful Winter Warmer when paired with a Hot Drink like Hot Cocoa or Mint Tea.*

### Ingredients:

2 Cups Flour  
½ Cups Milk  
½ Cups Olive oil  
½ Cups Warm water  
375 Grams Unsalted butter  
1 Teaspoon Salt  
½ Cup of Walnuts Crushed  
½ Cup Vanilla Sugar  
1 Egg  
1 Tablespoon Yeast

### OPTIONAL

2 Tablespoons Mahlab  
2 Tablespoons Musk  
(mustika)  
½ Cups Black Sesame seeds

### Directions

Place all your ingredients into a mixing bowl a bit at a time.

Judge the dough consistency

by checking the dough texture. It shouldn't break apart. It should have an oily feel to it.

Knead the dough and rest it for 1 hour in the sun or somewhere warm.

Roll out your dough into oval shapes and fill with cream cheese and cranberries.

### Making the Braid

Before you roll them into small logs, sprinkle vanilla sugar over the cranberries. Roll them up and put to one side. Each one requires 3 logs.

Plait the dough as seen in the photo. You can have filled or unfilled logs. This dough will give you a crispy outer, soft inner loaf. You can choose the size of each as you please.

Bake in the oven for 20 minutes on 390 degrees Fahrenheit.

Serve this festive dessert bread hot or cold with Sweet Mint Tea or Hot Chocolate.

### To make the Mint Tea

Use 2 Large Tablespoon of Dried Mint and 2 tablespoons of sugar. They will compliment the sour tastes of cream cheese and cranberries. A great winter warmer.

### Continued...



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*New York City during the Holidays*

**(BPT) - For some people, the holidays are meant to be spent at home, surrounded by friends and family. For others, they are a time to escape on vacation. And then there are those remarkable people who manage to work in both. To aid in that pursuit, here are six destinations across the country that are perfect for a quick holiday getaway.**

### **Asheville, N.C.**

Named by Good Morning America as one of the country's three most beautiful places, Asheville is a wonderful destination year-

round, but in the winter, this town really turns up the cheer.

Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains, the historic Grove Park Inn hosts the National Gingerbread House Competition, inviting contestants of all ages from across the country to enter their sugary masterpieces into this famous contest. The houses are on display throughout the resort until the beginning of January.

## Great Destinations to Visit over the Holidays in the USA

Across town, visitors to the area will find one of the largest private homes in America, The Biltmore Estate. Built by George Vanderbilt in the late 1800s, this 8,000-acre property is still family owned, and each year during the holiday season the home is decorated with dozens of trees, hundreds of wreaths and thousands of ornaments. It's a special treat to take an evening tour when all the candles and fireplaces are lit.

## New York City

Visiting NYC over the holiday season is like dropping into a movie scene. The vibrant colors, soft white blanket of snow, and beautifully decorated trees set the scene of a perfect Christmas.

Away.com, a travel inspiration site, recommends visitors to the Big Apple get tickets to the famous Radio City Christmas Spectacular and watch the 36 Rockettes kick their way through 'The Parade of the Wooden Soldiers' and 'The Twelve Days of Christmas.'



*Gingerbread Houses at Grove Park Inn, Asheville*

They also recommend to head over to Fifth Avenue and take in the holiday window displays at the famous department stores.

Don't miss the Rockefeller Christmas Tree, which has been a tradition for more than 75 years. And if that's not enough, several ice skating rinks and the holiday fair at Grand Central Station will surely fill out your vacation.

## Chicago, Illinois

Chicago is host to one of the largest traditional German Christmas markets outside of Germany.

The city's first Christkindlmarkt was held in 1996, and it now resides in Daley Plaza from the end of November through December.

A tree-lighting celebration kicks off the season, and visitors can experience German traditions without having to fly to Europe.

of sparkly decorations all over the park and castle. Of course there are parades with Disney characters, a Santa, and real reindeer, too.

The park caps off the evenings with a 'Believe...In Holiday Magic' fireworks show, with lots of color and even snow.

## Austin, Texas

Of course Austin, Texas, the 'Live Music Capital of the World,' would have a Christmas carol sing-along through the streets of downtown.

After you harmonize your way through 'Jingle Bells,' make your way over to the annual Armadillo Christmas Bazaar, which has more live music and art that is 100 percent 'Made in Austin.'

Once the sun goes down, take in 37th Street, which is famous for the thousands of lights that are displayed during the holidays. Clark Griswold has nothing on these people.

## South Deerfield, Massachusetts

If you're one of those people who cannot get enough of Christmas, then head to Yankee Candle's flagship store in Deerfield, Mass., 15 miles south of the Vermont border.

Year-round this store features an old fashioned German-style Bavarian Village. Mr. and Mrs. Claus are always nearby to say hello to the good boys and girls.

Tons of ornaments and decorations can be found and snow falls from the ceiling to the delight of visitors.

## Disneyland, Anaheim, California

The happiest place on earth might just be the merriest place on earth, too. Disneyland lights up the holiday season with tons

# Christmas Poems of Love

*Every day is a day for Love.*

*But there is something about Christmas and the beautiful Winter season that makes you realize how much you really love that special someone in your life. Don't let the holidays rush by, without telling your partner how much you love them. Celebrate your love this Christmas with these romantic poems for Him and Her. Add them to cards and gifts or simply recite one by the fireside and add the warmth of Love to your Joyous celebrations.*

## *From Him to Her*

### *In the Snow*



*The snow is falling down outside  
and I am here with you  
I push aside my manly pride  
and appreciate the view.*

*The temperature dips and falls,  
the wind brings in a chill  
but with you near I only feel  
a warm and steady thrill.*

*A snowflake falls and gently lands  
right there on your cheek  
I close my eyes and pray for storms  
to keep us there for weeks.*

Take some time out this Christmas and spend an hour or two by the fireplace. Think of Christmases gone by and those yet to come and promise each other that you will spend each one of them together.

## *By the Fire*



*The fire burns behind the grate  
the sun goes down, it's getting late.*

*We cuddle here before the fire,  
I look at you and I admire*

*The way the flames light up your hair  
and paint your looks like maiden fair*

*My heart is filled with peace and love,  
you're all that I am thinking of*

*There's nowhere else I'd rather be  
than spending Christmas here with thee.*

# Make Your Valentine Feel Special!

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## The Perfect Gift



*In a box, under the tree, set off to the side  
lies a certain special gift, that I have tried to hide*

*I spent some time, a month or two, trying so hard to find  
that perfect gift that could tell you, just what's on my mind*

*The jewelry seemed too cliché, the perfume too uptight  
the shoes were hard to understand, and clothes didn't seem right*

*a gift card wasn't personal, lingerie was too bold  
flowers didn't last that long, when the weather was so cold*

*My spirits sagged as time went on, I almost just gave up  
until I passed an office store, and a thought light-bulb lit up*

*You didn't need a fancy gift,, You told me from the start  
all you needed from me, is what is in my heart*

*In the box beneath the tree, is a journal wrapped in blue  
inside you'll find a massive list, of reasons why I love you*

## *From Her to Him*

### *Skating Together*



*My ice skate blades glide on the ice  
I giggle when you fall  
My big, strong protector man  
isn't graceful at all.*

*You clumsily get to your feet  
and I begin to see,  
even though you can't ice skate  
you're doing this for me.*

*I glide on over to your side  
and hold onto your arm.  
It's my turn to protect you  
and keep you from all harm.*

*We take a turn around the pond,  
you're slowly getting better;  
but then you tumble to the ground,  
at least we fell together!*

## Gingerbread Dreams



*We put the roof on the gingerbread house  
and talk about the past  
Christmas time was your favorite when you were a kid*

*I add a window and tell you about first grade  
we had a pageant  
I played a snowflake*

*Then comes a door, and a few more windows  
we talk about the present, about your hobbies and my job  
learning more about each other*

*we finish up the final touches  
and talk about the future  
maybe there will be kids, maybe a dog*

*the gingerbread house is done  
but we're still talking on the couch  
we were only building one thing, but maybe we built something else too*

***When your holiday-dinner guest list keeps growing year after year, it may be time to share the cooking.***

A potluck is a great way to share the load, and with just a little advance planning you can avoid ending up with 12 green bean casseroles on the dinner table.

'Don't be shy about assigning food categories to your guests,' says Ginny Bean, founder and publisher of Ginny's catalog and [www.ginnys.com](http://www.ginnys.com). This eliminates the guesswork for them, too.' Bean suggests you start planning four to six weeks out, and following these simple tips.

#### **Don't overlook the non-cooks**

Include categories such as beverages and paper products, or ask non-cooks to bring flowers, candles or other items to decorate the table. Those who want to help but need something easy to do can do some of the shopping for you.

#### **Double up**

Ask at least two of the guests to make different salads, two to make potato dishes, two people to bring vegetables, and two to bring pies. Plan on making the turkey, stuffing and gravy yourself.

#### **Make sure someone brings kid food**

There's nothing worse than having kids reject all the food at the table. Make sure there's ice cream or another dessert, sparkling apple juice for a special toast, and kid-friendly items like mac and cheese or yams with marshmallows.

#### **Pick your battles**

If someone really wants to



## **Quick Tips for Pulling Together a Holiday Potluck**

bring a certain dish that you don't particularly want, let them bring it anyway. You never know which dish might turn into a family tradition.

#### **Assess your appliance needs**

Ask guests to let you know ahead of time if they'll need a refrigerator or oven. The added capacity of countertop ovens and microwaves can be a godsend. Plan for some dishes that can be served at room temperature.

#### **Be prepared with extra serving plates, bowls and spoons**

Remind guests to label their serving dishes and utensils. Most regular potluck participants can tell tales about losing the lid to a favorite plastic bowl or discovering that the only casserole dish left on the table was not the one they brought.

#### **Don't attempt to serve all the food from one table**

Place desserts on a table separate from main dishes and side dishes. Locate beverages in another area. For the most convenient self-service, arrange the buffet so diners can serve themselves from both sides of the table. Lay out the table in logical order: plates at one end of the table for guests to pick up and load with food, and utensils tucked inside napkins at the other end to grab once their plates are full.

#### **Strike while the iron's hot (and guests are in a festive mood)**

Before everyone leaves, set up the planning committee and solicit suggestions for next year.

To request a copy of Ginny's catalog, log on to [Ginnys.com](http://Ginnys.com) or call (800) 487-9024.

# Christmas Tree Themes for 2012



## *Le Papillon*

*Spring in Winter? Why not! Decorate a Beautiful Butterfly themed tree this year. Attach artificial butterflies all over the tree using florist wire along with traditional ornaments to create a different look for your Christmas tree.*

# The New Colors of Christmas



## *Pretty in Pink*

*This lavishly decorated tree done in shades of Pink brings a fresh break from the reds without compromising on the festive element in the decorations. Large silk roses are paired with baubles and candy in varying shades. Pink is a lovely color and looks festive with dull gold and silver.*

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