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'Tis the Season

Hello Everyone,
We are fast approaching the busy holiday season. While it is easy to feel overwhelmed with what this time of year brings: stress of driving in snow, cold weather, preparing holiday meals, and buying presents; we hope to provide information to you that will help make this time of year a little less stressful and a lot more enjoyable! In these tough economic times it can bring about more financial and emotional woes. Spend time with the loved ones in your life, that is after all what this time of year is about! To help jumpstart togetherness we have put together a few ideas that will lead to a fun, festive, and stress free holiday season!

My Favorite Memory!

My favorite holiday memories with my grandma was baking cookies to deliver to our neighbors. We would listen to Bing Crosby and Nat King Cole and sing along while we frosted and decorated the different assortments of cookies. My grandma seemed to know all the recipes by heart! The house would fill with warm delicious scents of chocolate and gingerbread and I would sneak a spoonful of the batter when no one was looking. What I will always remember and keep with me is the patience and love my grandma so generously shared. I will always cherish the laughs and smiles that were shared during these times and I will forever keep these wonderful memories in my heart.



Holiday Gift Ideas



Giving a gift should not be stressful, nor should it be expensive. Read these fun, easy, and very thoughtful ideas that will be treasured for years to come!

Pictures do not always have to be put into frames. If you have a favorite picture of your grandson, granddaughter, or friend, try tips 1 & 3. They will put a new spin on how you display your photos.

1. Collages are a great replacement for a scrapbook because it is all pictures and you do not have to spend money on the material used to fill up the pages. Start with a large canvas OR poster board. Grab all the pictures you have and begin to arrange them on

the canvas in some symbolic or meaningful way.

For your grandchildren perhaps have the shape be the letter of their first name (i.e. "C"). Start with

their baby pictures and move down in chronological order to present day. A well-made collage is more meaningful than a store-bought item because it is a one of a kind design made specifically for someone special in your life!

2. Ornaments, children usually make ornaments at school and gift to family member. Making an ornament for a family member that is personal and meaningful will be a wonderful present. It is something that will be used every year and will



be very special for the recipient for years to come.

3. Picture Puzzle Blocks,

while digital picture frames allow you to view picture after picture without opening a photo album, they are quite costly. A picture puzzle block is something I have done and have received many compliments. This easy and inexpensive gift will be fun for all ages. What you will need: 6 2" wood blocks (found at your local craft store) for a 4"x6" picture. Now take 6 pictures (all the same size) and cut them into 6 pieces (1 piece for each block). Glue each picture piece onto one of the blocks'. You now should have a puzzle of pictures that turned and put together the right way creates 6 different photos that can be changed at your leisure.

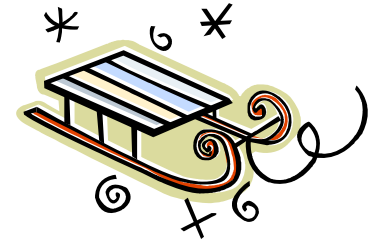
4. Baked goods are a great way to show someone you care! The time and effort you put into baking some sweet treats will be felt with every yummy bite!

5. Coupon Book, a homemade coupon book will let you collect on spending time with friends, getting a back rub, or letting someone else worry about the dishes! It is a great way to help someone out and a wonderful way for kids to give a gift without spending any money. Fill the book with all the things you know will benefit a loved one!



Fun Indoor and Outdoor Winter Activities

There is something wonderful about wrapping up in a warm blanket on a snowy day. However, children seem to have an over abundance of energy. Keep them busy with these fun indoor and outdoor activities perfect for this time of year!



Ice Sculptures An art project involving icicles and frozen blocks of colored ice

You will need: Food coloring, Water, Ice trays, and molds or muffin tins and other containers.

You can't have as much snow as we do and not have an abundance of icicles. Use them in your sculptures by joining them to ice blocks.

These are made by freezing colored water in ice-cube trays, Jell-O molds and yogurt containers. Keep all the materials on a tarp or cardboard. Everyone can work together to build whatever your imagination lead to.

Hint: use water to "glue" the blocks of ice together.

Making snowmen outside or playing a board game around the kitchen table is fun for all to enjoy. Have each member of your family come up with their own indoor/outdoor activity for the season. It is a great way to encourage creativity while making memories!

Mancala- by using household items make this game and play!

You will need:

- 1 carton from a dozen eggs - Only need bottom side (where the eggs sit).
- 36 stones, marbles, or whatever small markers you have handy.
- 2 small bowls or dishes for each end.

How to Play:



1. Three pieces -- marbles or stones -- are placed in each of the 12 holes. Each player has a 'bank' to the (their) right side of the Mancala board. Any shallow bowl works well.
2. The game begins with one player picking up all of the pieces in any one of the holes on his/her side.
3. Moving counter-clockwise, the player deposits one of the stones in each hole until the stones run out.
4. If you run into your bank, deposit one piece in it. If you run into your opponent's bank, skip it.
5. If the last piece you drop is in your own bank, you get a free turn.
6. If the last piece you drop is in an empty hole on your side, you capture that piece and any pieces in the hole directly opposite (on your opponent's side).
7. Always place all captured pieces in your bank.
8. The game ends when all six spaces on one side of the Mancala board are empty.
9. The player who still has pieces on his side of the board when the game ends captures all of those pieces.
10. Count all the pieces in each bank. The winner is the player with the most pieces.

Appetizers

• **Boston Bean Dip Recipe**

- 30 oz. can red kidney beans (rinsed and drained)
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1/4 C. mayonnaise
- 1/2 C. sweet relish
- 1/4 t. ground black pepper
- 1/4 t. salt
- 1/4 t. dry mustard powder

Mix all ingredients together in a food processor. Chill. Better the next day. Top with Chili Sauce before serving.

• **Bacon Squares Recipe**

- 1 C. Mayonnaise
- 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- ½ tsp. Garlic salt
- 2 c. Shredded cheddar cheese
- 8 slices bacon, crisply fried and crumbled
- 4 green onions, sliced
- 14 slices white bread

Heat oven to 400° F.

Mix all ingredients together. Spread about 2-3 Tbsp. over each slice of bread - end to end. Bake on ungreased baking sheet for 10 minutes or until cheese is melted. Cut each slice into quarters with pizza cutter. Serve hot. Note: Can be made ahead and frozen and then baked when needed.

Yields 56 appetizers.

Main Course

• **Cranberry Mustard Pork Chops**

- 4 pork loin chops with bone
- 4 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1/4 cup cranberry juice

In a small bowl, stir together cranberry juice and mustard.

Place pork chops in a shallow dish in a single layer; pour cranberry mixture over pork chops and coat chops evenly. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.

In a large frying pan, grease pan with non-stick cooking spray or olive oil and place pan over medium high heat. When pan is hot add pork chops, cover partially and cook 10 minutes. Turn chops and cook another 5 to 10 minutes uncovered. Cook through, but so that the chops are still juicy. Serves 4

Holiday Recipes

• **Holiday Ham Recipe**

- 7 lbs. Ham, rind removed
- whole cloves
- 1 lb. dark brown sugar

- 1 (12-oz.) can Coca-Cola
- 1 (14-oz.) can pineapple rings, drained and juice reserved
- 1 cup sweet Concord grape wine
- 10-12 maraschino cherries
- fresh bay leaves, for garnish

Heat oven to 325°F.

Using a sharp knife, score surface of ham crosswise and lengthwise, forming a crosshatch pattern about 1/4-in. deep and 1-in. apart. Place 1 clove in the center of each square. Place ham, fat side up, in a double-layer disposable aluminum roasting pan. Pat the brown sugar onto the surface of the ham. (Expect some sugar to fall into the roasting pan.)

Transfer to oven, and bake until brown sugar just begins to melt, about 30 minutes.

Pour Coca-Cola over ham, mixing with melted sugar in bottom of roasting pan. Baste ham with sugar mixture. Return to oven, and bake for 20 minutes more.

Meanwhile, combine 1 cup reserved pineapple juice and wine in a small bowl. Baste ham with pineapple mixture.

Bake ham for a total of 16 minutes per pound, basting every 20 minutes. During the last 20 minutes of baking time, decorate ham with pineapple rings. Use 2-3 toothpicks to hold each ring in place. Center a cherry in the center of each ring, and attach it with a toothpick.

Transfer ham to a platter, removing all toothpicks. Garnish ham with fresh bay leaves.

Makes 10-12 servings.





Holiday Recipes Continued

Beverages

• **Candy Cane Cocoa**

- 4 cups milk
- 3 (1 ounce) squares semisweet chocolate, chopped
- 4 peppermint candy canes, crushed
- 1 cup whipped cream
- 4 small peppermint candy canes

In a saucepan, heat milk until hot, but not boiling. Whisk in the chocolate and the crushed peppermint candies until melted and smooth. Pour hot cocoa into four mugs, and garnish with whipped cream. Serve each with a candy cane stirring stick.

Makes 4 servings

• **Kinderpunsch**

"Kinderpunsch" is an alcohol-free hot punch, served mainly in Christmas markets in Germany. Substitute grape juice for apple if you'd like.

- 1 cup water
- 2/3 cup white sugar
- 2 pinches ground cloves
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 3 cups apple juice
- 1 lemon, sliced

In a 3 quart saucepan, bring water, sugar, cloves and cinnamon to boil.

Stir in juice and heat through. Do not boil. Take spices out and pour over lemon slices in serving bowl. Serve warm. Makes 1 1/2 quarts

Desserts

• **Cranberry Swirl Cheesecake**

- 1 1/2 cups vanilla wafer crumbs
- 4 tablespoons melted butter
- 3 envelopes gelatin
- 2 cups water
- 2 pounds cream cheese
- 5 eggs -- separated
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 1 tablespoon orange peel
- 1 cup sugar
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 3/4 cups cranberries

Pat crumbs and butter into 10" spring form. Soften gelatin in water, set aside.

Blend cream cheese, egg yolks, vanilla, juice, peel and sugar. Gradually add 1 3/4 cup of the gelatin. Beat egg whites (reserve 1 Tbsp for garnish) stiff and fold into cheese mixture. Refrigerate 30 - 45 minutes.

Cook sugar, water and cranberries until skins pop (5 minutes). Add remaining gelatin, puree and refrigerate until mixture mounds. Marble cream cheese and cranberry mixture in crust, refrigerate overnight.

GARNISH: Dip 6 whole cranberries in reserved egg white, roll in sugar and set for 1 hour.

• **Chewy Noels Cookie Recipe**

- 2 T. butter, melted
- 1 C. brown sugar
- 5 T. all-purpose flour
- 1/8 t. baking soda
- 1 C. chopped walnuts or pecans
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 t. vanilla extract
- confectioners sugar

Preheat oven to 350° F. In a large bowl, mix together eggs, brown sugar, flour, baking soda, nuts, and vanilla extract. Pour melted butter into 7 x 11-inch pan. Pour batter over melted butter without stirring. Bake for 20 minutes. Cool, cut into squares, and roll in confectioner's sugar.

Feeling Stressed?

How to Unwind in a Short Amount of Time

Here are a few things that may help you distress!

Listen to Music

If you're feeling overwhelmed by a stressful situation, try taking a break and listening to relaxing classical music. Playing calm music has a positive effect on the brain and body, can lower blood pressure, and reduce cortisol, a hormone linked to stress.

Call a Friend

If you're feeling overwhelmed, take a break to call a friend and talk about your problems. Good relationships with friends and loved-ones are important to any healthy lifestyle, and there's no time that this is more evident than when you're under a lot of stress. A reassuring voice, even for a minute, can put everything in perspective.

Exercise

Walking 20 minutes per day can change body chemistry in a way that calms the nervous system and reduces stress levels. Aerobic exercise is especially good for producing endorphins in the body - which are natural soothing hormones released during sustained exercise.

Enjoy a cup of herbal tea at night.

Create a bedtime ritual of drinking chamomile tea to relax.

Drink Green Tea during the day.

It has less than half the caffeine of coffee and contains healthy antioxidants, as well as thiamine—an amino acid that has a calming and soothing effect on the nervous system.

Read something stimulating.

Even if it's just a few pages of a novel before bed, skim something to challenge yourself. Reading before bed is a better way to fall asleep than watching TV (the light and noise stimulate your brain and keep you awake longer).

Redefine your stressors.

Try to look at it from a different angle. Instead of being upset you have to drive in the snow, take a moment to enjoy the winter wonderland!

Talk Yourself Through It

Sometimes calling a friend is not an option. If this is the case, talking to yourself can be the next best thing to avoid wiggling out. Don't worry about seeming crazy, just tell yourself why you're stressed out, what you have to do to complete the task at hand, and most importantly, that everything will be okay (trust us, it will be).

Action Plan!

Create time for you by making a plan to do so. Every week plan on doing something just for you. Whether you are watching your favorite TV show, reading a book 10 minutes every day, or going for a walk a few times a week. Making time for you will benefit everyone. When your needs are being met you will feel better able to handle your families' needs!

Start by asking yourself these questions:

1. **What** are you going to do?
2. **How much** are you going to do it?
3. **When** are you going to do it?
4. **How often** are you going to do it?

Example: This week I will read a book (what) for 20 minutes (how much), at night (when), 3 nights a week (how often).



Grandfamily Support Contacts Across Montana

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*Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever
you are, who ever you are, you need one.*

~Jane Howard

