



A Recipe *for more*

CHOCOLATE CAKE MOMENTS



A RECIPE FOR CREATING FAMILY HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

The Holidays are a great opportunity to have fun with your family. However, the season is short and there is a lot to do – gift buying, baking, wrapping, Holiday parties, decorating, and writing and addressing cards, to name a few. Agh! Don't let the stress of the Holiday Season overwhelm you where you forget to have fun. After all, the Holidays are all about family.

You may already have some traditions in place. There are so many activities around the Holidays like plays, concerts, and parties to keep your family in the fun. But it's also nice to just relax, stay in, maybe light a fire, admire your decorations, and have fun in your home. Here's some stimulation on how to plan and schedule some Family Holiday Traditions to create memories and lots of smiles.

SOME GUIDELINES:

1. **Book it!** If it's not on the calendar, it doesn't get done. So, sit down with your family at dinner and ask what types of activities they would like to do this Holiday Season. Each person can pick one activity, or if your kids are young pick for them. Then pick a date for each and write them down in the master family calendar. Now it is booked so everyone can look forward to the fun.
2. **Plan it!** If there are any tasks that need to be completed prior to the activity, do them now while it's not so busy. Send out invitations, buy tickets, call Grandma to get that cookie recipe, check on Holiday Tea Times, or investigate volunteer opportunities with your favorite local charity. If you take care of all of the details now, you won't be scrambling and making more stress for yourself in December.
3. **Be Creative.** Think about the traditions you have already and amp them up with a little creative juice.
4. **Try something new.** Have a Family Adventure. If you love it, do it again year after year.
5. **Make it a Party.** The more the merrier.
6. **Rediscover Your Family Room.** Enjoy staying home and admiring your decorations.
7. **Ask the experts.** Ask your friends what traditions they do around the Holidays or check out these inspiring ideas.

Following is a sample of ideas for creating enduring Holiday Traditions for your Family. Don't forget the Chicago classics like admiring the Holiday Window Displays, the Christkindlmarket, cutting a real tree, Christmas Carol at the Goodman Theater, Joffrey Nutcracker Ballet, Rockettes Holiday Show, or the Fourth Presbyterian Holiday Concert.

10 HOLIDAY TRADITION IDEAS

1. **Holiday Tea Party.** Mother/daughter, sisters, Grandma/Granddaughters. Check out your favorite place (Drake, Peninsula, Four Seasons) or host one yourself.
2. **Hide 'n Seek Traditions.** A great way to usher in the Holiday Season is with Holiday hide and seek traditions like Elf on the Shelf or the Christmas Pickle.
3. **Bake Holiday Cookies.** There is no better way to spend quality time with your family than in the kitchen cooking, eating and talking. Get Grandma, Aunts or even neighbors involved. Or, try a new cake recipe each year for Thanksgiving dinner. Everyone at the table gets to vote.
4. **Create a Holiday Scrapbook.** Together as a family, create a scrapbook of the previous Holiday family gathering. Everyone can decorate their own page and it's a nice way to sit and talk about what you enjoyed last year.
5. **Holiday Movie Marathon.** Pick a day, keep your jammies on, and watch your favorite Christmas specials or movies. Everyone can choose their favorite show and you can watch them back-to-back together. If you have any home movies of Holidays past, this is the perfect time to watch.
6. **The Competitive Holiday Spirit.** Organize a Holiday Olympics to get the competitive juices flowing. If you have a Nintendo Wii, your family can see who's best at bowling, tennis, or 3-Point Shoot-Out. Or, make a contest out of common Holiday tasks - Who can wrap a present the fastest? Who can untangle the first string of lights?
7. **Extreme Gift Exchange.** Sometimes the weirdest gifts are the most memorable. Inspire some creativity in your family with an oddball gift exchange. Have everyone come up with some silly ideas for a gift theme and then sit back and laugh as the gifts are opened. Some ideas we have done in our family include:
 - Give a piece of funny (or incredibly ugly) artwork (you can always make it yourself)
 - Funny T-shirts
 - Socks (the uglier the better)
 - Pick a country out of a hat and buy a funny gift that represents that country
 - Choose a letter out of a hat and the gift must start with that letter
8. **Have Fun Giving Back.** Teach your kids the importance of helping others. Help pack Care Packages for the troops. Buy gifts from the giving trees at local libraries and YMCAs for kids in need. Have a wrapping party where everyone in the family wraps their gift donation. Create cookie care packages for a local nursing home. Make bird seed "ornaments" with Styrofoam, peanut butter, and bird seed to decorate trees outside and feed the birds. Serve Holiday dinner at a soup kitchen.
9. **Make the Annual Ornament.** Every year, pick an ornament to make together. Put them on the tree or give them as gifts. When your kids get their own house, give them their ornaments for their first tree.
10. **Create a Neighborhood Decorating Theme or Tree Looking Dinner.** Get all of your neighbors to put out Snowmen each year. Then have a party and ask everyone to vote on who has the best "themed" decorations. Or have a progressive dinner where people get to go "tree looking" and see everyone's Holiday decorations.

HOLIDAY TRADITION PLANNING GUIDE

1. What activities do we like to do as a family?
2. Are there any special events during this Holiday Season that you enjoy or look forward to every year?
3. Who else could you invite to participate? When will you invite them?
4. What's something a little extra we could do to make this tradition more memorable or put our family spin on it?
5. What can the kids do to help plan the tradition?
6. Any supplies needed? Make a list ahead of time and get it all done now.



