

Season's Greetings

Children Can Help Prepare For Holidays

Once upon a time, Christmas was a peaceful family holiday. These days, however, parents are often so busy with Christmas entertaining, shopping and cooking—not to mention their jobs—that the season can easily become rushed and children stand to miss out on all the joys of this special time of year.

How can parents make sure kids don't get lost in the hustle and bustle of holiday shopping and entertaining?

Sue Smith, home economist from Black & Decker, has some creative (and delicious) tips to help put the holiday focus back on the family by involving children in holiday preparations.

- Turn the kids' excitement for Christmas into constructive energy. Let them help around the house with easy decorating tasks that don't take a long time or require careful supervision.

- Kitchen time is the perfect time to get kids involved. When baking, let your child be the "dessert chef" by allowing him/her to assist you when mixing cake frosting for a special holiday dessert.

- Use lightweight, easy-to-operate appliances—these features make kitchen projects easier for children and parents alike. For example, Black & Decker's Handy-Mixer™ Cordless Beater allows a parent to move an entire mixing project down to a child's eye level. And to make it easy on adults, the detachable parts from this mixer



Traditions behind the very first Christmas gifts

The beloved tradition of gift-giving at Christmastime began, as we all know, just after the birth of Christ, when the Three Wise Men, following their guiding star from the East, arrived to adore the infant Jesus, and each brought with him a valuable tribute.

Gold, according to tradition (not the Bible, which neither names nor numbers the Magi), in the form of a box containing a shrine, was brought by Melchior, the King of Arabia.

Frankincense, contained in a jar, was brought by the youngest of the Magi, Caspar, the King of Tarsus, and myrrh, carried in a golden horn, was brought by Balthazar, the King of Ethiopia.

We all know what gold is, but frankincense and myrrh—both out of common use in this century—may mystify many people.

Both are aromatic substances, which had great value in the ancient world. Frankincense is the gum of a tree native to India and the northern reaches of Arabia.

An essential ingredient in the holy anointing oil used by the officiators at the Temple in Jerusalem, it was a substance whose use was familiar only to the privileged. It was burned also as incense; therefore, its sweet fragrance was familiar to worshippers.

Myrrh, the gum of a bush or small tree which, in antiquity, edged the shores of the Red Sea, and grew in southern Arabia, was also an ingredient in the anointing oil, a blend of rare and precious substances, to be sure.

Credited with the virtue of easing suffering, myrrh was mixed with wine to make a soothing drink offered to Christ while He was on the cross—a drink He refused, choosing to remain conscious and keenly aware of the suffering He was undergoing.

Myrrh often was used to ready the dead for burial; it was one of the spices

brought by Nicodemus for Christ, after the crucifixion. Thus Christ received the same gift after death which He was given at birth.

In addition to its intrinsic value, each of the gifts brought by the Wise Men to the Christ Child had a symbolic value, as pertinent today as it was in Biblical times.

Gold, one of the purest of all substances, represents virtue. Sweet-smelling frankincense, because its burning frequently accompanied religious ceremonies, came to be a symbol for prayer, and myrrh, with its acrid fragrance, both a balm that eases pain and an anointment for the dead, represents suffering.

When did the Magi arrive at the Manger? While guesses range from 12 days after Christ's birth, to two years following the event, their arrival is celebrated traditionally on Epiphany, also known as Twelfth Night, which falls on January 6th.

In certain countries, such as Spain and Italy, it is on Epiphany, rather than Christmas Day itself, that gifts are exchanged.

A holiday of much merriment, governed by a Lord of Misrule (a holdover from Saturnalia revels of Roman times), it was an occasion for practical jokes and tricks.

It was also the occasion, in parts of Europe, for ceremonies warding off the devil, should he roam abroad on that night.

And it is the final day of the Twelve Days of Christmas, originally set out in the sixth century by the Council of Tours.

As such, the climax of the Christmas season, it is a time of great joy, depicted through all eternity by the image of the Three Magi, on their knees adoring the Christ Child, and symbolizing their worship with the most precious substances they knew: Gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, Magi came from the East to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East and have come to worship him" ... And behold, the star that they had seen in the East went before thee, until it came and stood over the place where the child was. And when they saw the star they rejoiced exceedingly.

America Has Much For Which To Give Thanks

When America's families sit down at the dinner table this holiday season to reflect on the year's blessings and look forward to the challenges of the new year, they might take some time to consider how fortunate they really are.

"Even in difficult and uncertain times, we Americans enjoy many advantages that allow us to help the poor overseas," says Philip Johnston, executive director of CARE, the international relief and development organization.

"If you ever doubt that, all you have to do is compare what is on the table around which your family will gather this holiday season with the food on the plates of families in the Third World," he says.

The typical American family will feast on a holiday turkey or roast, complete with Mom's favorite stuffing or gravy, sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, fresh bread, salads, and desserts. They will quench their thirst with milk, juice, coffee, tea, or other beverages.

In flood-ravaged Bangladesh, lucky families will share a CARE package that contains some rice and lentils, a handful of biscuits, and molasses. They will drink polluted river water treated with purification tablets. Many families will have even less.

In war-torn Mozambique, refugees driven off their farmland by terrorist attacks will eat leaves and roots while they wait for relief shipments to reach them.

"According to government statistics, the average American family living in an urban area can expect to spend about \$100 a week for its groceries," Johnston explains.

"That's what many Third World families earn in an entire year," he says. "For \$100, CARE can provide enough food to keep 100 families in Bangladesh from starving."

Relief officials say 1988 was an especially tough year on the poor overseas. Record floods, drought, earthquakes, hurricanes, infestations of locusts and a variety of other natural and man-made disasters in dozens of countries through-



His stomach swollen from lack of food, a Mozambican child eats a meal provided by CARE.

out Asia, Africa and Latin America have left nearly 50 million people homeless, sick or hungry. Many millions more are refugees fleeing civil wars, tribal conflicts or terrorists.

"As they have during many other emergencies in the past, the American people have opened their hearts and are sharing some of their bounty with poor people overseas," Johnston

says. "The holiday period is when CARE receives so much of that support," he says. "This year, it's more important than ever before. So many people are depending on us."

For more information about crisis gripping families around the world, contact: CARE, Dept. M, 680 First Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016.



go right in the dishwasher for convenient clean up.

- For those parents who have no time to bake dessert, let kids make any store-bought cake/cupcakes more festive by adding nuts, chocolate shavings, or dried fruit which can be easily chopped in a compact mincer/chopper. As an added safety feature for kids and adults, Black & Decker's HandyChopper Mincer/Chopper will not start until the lid is securely fastened.

- Another interesting idea is a festive holiday breakfast with edible Christmas wreaths—toasted bagels topped with cream cheese, chopped green parsley and red pepper "bows." Use a toaster with extra wide slots for bagels and a cool-touch exterior to prevent accidental burns, so your kids can even prepare this Christmas treat for you.

Black & Decker's FasToast™ Toaster makes a good choice.

- Making Christmas presents together is always a fun activity. One creative idea is to make a holiday nightshirt from a plain white t-shirt, some fabric paint, iron-on fabric and, of course, an iron. First, let your child create the artwork, using paints to write names and holiday messages on the shirt, and iron-on fabric to create holiday cut-outs (like holly leaves, candy canes and stars). Next, a parent can follow the art supply package directions to iron the artwork to the shirt. The result is a one-of-a-kind nightshirt that will be cherished for many Christmases to come.

- Use an iron with strong steam performance for this craft project. One with an auto shut-off feature, like Black & Decker's Automatic Shut-Off™ Electronic Iron, will also provide added peace of mind during the hectic holiday season.

- Finally, for a Christmas project children can do by themselves (if peace and quiet is the one thing that is needed at the moment), kids can make a centerpiece for the table with pine branches, holly, pine cones and other seasonal foliage that can be found around the yard.

The upcoming holiday season should not be one of hectic, non-stop preparation. With a little ingenuity, Christmas can be what it should be: a time to enjoy with family and friends.

If you're planning on serving fresh turkey, pick the bird up just one or two days before you plan to cook it.

FOLLOWING THEIR GUIDING STAR, the Magi travel toward Bethlehem, to worship the infant Jesus, bringing with them rare and precious gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Illustration: New York Public Library Picture Collection.

Green and red holly is an apt Yuletide symbol

With its green leaves and red berries, holly is the classic symbol of the Christmas season. The brightness of its colors, especially dramatic against the stark dead whiteness of winter's snows, was viewed by primitive people as a sign of life in a world of death.

Like mistletoe and the evergreen tree, holly has been intertwined with holidays marking the winter solstice since Druidic times, and all three plants were adopted into Christian tradition many centuries ago.

In addition, the thorny edges of some holly leaves recall the crown of thorns Christ wore, making holly an especially potent symbol of the Christmas season.

Think of holly's red berries as drops of blood, and the fact that the holly plant, too, is an evergreen—therefore a metaphor for eternal life—and its aptness as a visual image of Christmas, and the hope Christ brings to mankind, becomes even stronger.

Going back to pre-Christian times, holly boughs were among the evergreen plants that decked the halls of Teutonic homes, because it was believed that holly had the power to protect the inhabitants from evil spirits, as well as being able to deter the storms and icy cold weather of winter which were such a threat to primitive societies.

In 15th century England, garlanding homes and churches with evergreens—including holly—was an accepted custom.

Washington Irving describes a typical English Christmas in his *Sketchbook*, and among the first elements he mentions are the evergreens.

Writes Irving, "The great picture of the crusader and his white horse had been profusely decorated with greens for the occasion, and holly and ivy had likewise been wreathed round the helmet and weapons on the opposite wall, which I understood were the arms of the same warrior."

Of particular note was the English method of adorning church pews with innumerable branches of holly and yew, a custom that lasted until the late years of the 19th century.

As carefully as the work of decorating buildings with evergreens proceeded, equally fastidious was the manner in which they were taken down and disposed of, after the holiday season had passed.

It was considered bad luck to let an evergreen bough fall to the ground, and in many British communities they were not thrown out once the holiday was over but, rather, ceremoniously burnt.

By this time, from being a plant associated with the heathen, holly had become holy. A series of medieval carols outlied holly's myriad virtues, and linked its physical characteristics with various aspects of Christ's life.

In the traditional carol, "The Holly and the Ivy," the first stanza ends, "Of all the trees are in the wood/ The holly bears the crown."

Subsequent verses compare and contrast the white flower which holly bears to Mary's bearing Christ "to be our sweet Saviour," the prickly holly bears to Mary's bearing Christ "on Christmas in the morn," and, finally, the bitter bark that holly bears to Mary bearing "sweet Jesus Christ/ For to redeem us all."

Today, whether or not we know the legends behind it, many of us deck our halls with holly in boughs and on wreaths as Christmas approaches.

But, be careful what kind of holly is the first to be brought through the door. According to British legend, if a prickly variety of holly is first, the man of the house will rule the roost through the coming year; if non-prickly holly is first, the woman of the house will have the honor of ruling the household in the year to come. Those holly boughs will never seem the same again!

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HUMILITY ISN'T ONE OF MY FAULTS, BUT IF I HAD ONE, THAT WOULD BE IT

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