

Making Christmas Memories

According to local stores, the Christmas season began the day after Halloween. They have given Thanksgiving a brief nod and gone directly to Christmas. At the time of this writing, it isn't Thanksgiving yet, but by the time this is being read I know I will have enjoyed that holiday – more than once by the time all the family dinners are completed! Thanksgiving gets my vote for favorite meal of the year with no calorie counting allowed.

Right now, however, I'm not thinking about Thanksgiving. I'm thinking about Christmas. With all the catalogs, flyers and store displays beckoning, I'm feeling motivated to get a jump start on my holiday baking and shopping. This year I'm determined to have visions of sugarplums, not nightmares for the Christmas holidays. In keeping with my own tradition of making gifts, I'm making a list (and checking it twice) of projects and supplies. Much of what I make is repeated every year so it's always nice to throw something new into the mix to keep the holidays fresh and fun.

Making gifts is not a new thing for me and much of what I make comes from my kitchen. Last year I had the brilliant idea to make homemade caramels. I had no idea what a labor intensive project that would be. Stirring for hours and hours on end – but at least I could sit and watch television while cutting the wax paper and wrapping what seemed like thousands of pieces of candy. But they were so well worth the effort! They were the best caramels I ever ate and there was no lack of family and friends willing to help with their disposal. Making candy was so much fun that I would like to add to my repertoire. For other ideas, I'm searching through books at the Bartholomew County Public Library.

The following list is made up of books I've looked through for ideas on traditions, decorations, gifts and food. These could get you started on some new holiday customs. Some books are brand new and others are old favorites. Here are a baker's dozen to get you started, but there are so many more available than the ones listed here.

- *Hundred Dollar Holiday: The Case for a More Joyful Christmas*
- *A Simple Christmas: Celebrating the Old-Fashioned Way in a Post-Modern World*
- *The Great American Christmas Almanac: A Complete Compendium of Facts, Figures and Traditions*
- *Creating Christmas Memories: Traditions to Celebrate with Family*
- *Big Book of Paper Crafts (new!)*
- *Christmas in America (new!)*
- *Country Living Country Christmas*
- *Holiday Crafting & Baking with Children (new)*
- *Holiday Dinners with Bradley Ogden (new)*
- *The Gingerbread Book (new)*
- *Christmas Cooking for Dummies*
- *Quacker Factory Christmas*

- *Southern Living* and *Gooseberry Patch* books

These books can help you with ideas about how to create wonderful memories whether you limit spending to just \$100 to keep Christmas simple and “old fashioned” or have a huge “blowout”! Projects in these books can be as simple or as complicated as you want (or have the time to make) and there are many that can be made with small children. Whatever you decide to do, the most important thing to remember is to choose projects and recipes that you enjoy making as much as giving. Not only do you make something, you also make a memory.

“May the wonder that is Christmas touch the child that is within your heart” from *The Big Book of Christmas Joy*.

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