On Thanksgiving and every day, always give thanks

By Bill O’Boyle
Staff Writer

WILKES-BARRE — As Thanksgiving approaches, I wonder if we all get what that truly is a day of giving thanks.

That’s the way we always celebrated Thanksgiving in our house in Plymouth. We would all gather around the table, hold hands, say a prayer and at the end, we would express thanks for all we had and all that was provided.

For us kids, Thanksgiving meant several good things — a football game at Huber Field against arch rival Nanticoke, a huge meal with all the trimmings, and the realization that November was almost over and December was near, which meant Christmas and Santa Claus were just around the corner.

And on that Friday after Thanksgiving, my dad would take my mom and I across the Carry Avenue Bridge to the Last Chance — a small outdoor business that sold vegetables and fruit during the summer and Christmas trees in winter. My dad would ask me to walk through the rows of trees to find one that looked good. We always ended up with a Douglas fir, mostly because my mom loved those trees for their appearance and aroma and they kept their needles longer than most other species.

So after dad would negotiate an acceptable price with the owner, we would tie it to the top of the car and head back home. We would carry the tree into the house and mount it in a tree stand that had ample space for water.

From here, dad would string the lights and mom and I would decorate the tree, the last step putting on strings of icicles. The magic moment was when we would turn out the lights in the front room and dad would plug the tree lights in and we would step back and admire our work.

This was a ritual practiced throughout the neighborhood. It was a really big deal. We would spend Saturday and Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend going house to house to see their trees. And there was no jealousy — every decorated tree was beautiful and there was always time to stop and chat as us kids fidgeted because we just wanted to get home and maybe go sledding down Reynolds Street or Nottingham Street.

This year, as we gather around the table at Thanksgiving, let’s take time to remember what really matters: FAMILY and TRADITION.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Family and tradition hold true, at work and at home

By Emilio Arizt
C & S Wholesale Grocers/ShurSave Markets

Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays, and at ShurSave Markets, although all holidays are important to our business, there is something very special about Thanksgiving.

One of the reasons is because at ShurSave, we are a locally owned, neighborhood, family business. We are dedicated to the communities we serve and are very special about Thanksgiving.

Over the years, Lisa has kept every tradition possible, plus all of her mother’s recipes — even my grandmother’s special Cole slaw and her own mother’s gravy from all of the turkey trimmings.

As fun as this can be, because in recent years we have had a chef in the house — my son Michael — sometimes this provides for competition. But trust me, I know whose kitchen it is and I know where the talent comes from — my wife, Lisa.

Now, doesn’t that define tradition? You can just taste the homemade gravy from all of the turkey trimmings.

This year, as we gather around the table at Thanksgiving, let’s take time to remember what really matters: FAMILY and TRADITION.

From the ShurSave family to all of our loyal family of customers, Happy Thanksgiving!

See THANKSGIVING | 6
By Kerry Miscavage
Advertising Director

Just like my mother says, Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday. My husband and I have hosted Thanksgiving dinner for over 15 years, and it truly is the best time of the year for us. Our home becomes a bed-and-breakfast for my family and their dogs for three days, and there is nothing like it. I love to see everyone arrive, and I wipe my brow once they leave. It’s also a great time to catch up with my husband’s family and a few close friends we couldn’t have dinner without.

Thanksgiving Day is fun for us, and we can always count on several things happening. I will have forgotten something essential at the store, and my mom and I will look at each other and say, “Now what?”

In the days preceding Thanksgiving, my family knows I will be doing a long hunt for the famous Turkey Pot. This year is no different, and the search usually has the same ending – me purchasing a new one. Where do they go? My husband could answer this, but that’s a whole other story.

This reminds me, I need a trip to Boscov’s…

Speaking of my husband, we certainly can count on him breezing through the kitchen several times, checking on our progress and making sure we are on track to eat precisely at 4 p.m. You see, one year we were about two hours late, and we’ll never live it down. I’m not sure what happened, other than perhaps opening the dinner-table wine a little too early.

One year, in my grandmother’s tradition, I made a strawberry Jell-O in her special mold. Not being an expert on getting Jell-O out of the mold, I lost the dessert down the kitchen sink. Well, we didn’t have Jell-O that year, and we still laugh about it every year. My friend Trish also has a Jell-O tradition in her family, and she bought me the best mold for my wedding shower. Ten years later I will be using it. Let’s hope for the best!

There are a few things we can count on to go right. We make a great turkey and stuffing. We get an almost 25-pound fresh turkey every year from my brother-in-law’s business, City Mager. The turkeys are delicious, and they cook evenly and have a pop-up indicator when done. Our stuffing is a basic Pepperidge Farm stuffing base – the usual chicken broth, celery and onions – and sausage. Last year I added a special spice I brought back from the old Dubai spice souks. I don’t remember what it is called, but it added significant flavor.

This year will be exciting because my 16-month-old niece will be running around “helping” us in the kitchen. My mother already has made her a special Thanksgiving hat, which I’m sure will be a new tradition for as many years as she lets us put it on her.

I’m not sure what else to expect this year but a lot of laughs, good food and time well-spent with family that we don’t get the rest of the year.

Happy Thanksgiving and enjoy your time with family and friends. I certainly am thankful for all of our Times Leader employees who work hard daily to provide the best in community news and advertising to all of our loyal readers.

Enjoy!

From my mom, Jacquie:
Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday.

First of all, the day gives us a chance to get off the roller coaster that most of us ride daily during our hectic lives. We stop, we breathe and we laugh, even for just one day.

Thanksgiving brings back memories of my childhood. I remember the smells, the tastes, and most of all the laughter and love shared by my family.

I look forward to sharing time with my daughter as we prepare the meal that always includes traditional favorites. Over the years I have passed my daughter the baton as head chef, and I happily take on my role as her sous chef.

Often we kick off the holiday season with some favorite Christmas songs, singing at the top of our lungs and laughing at ourselves.

Feeling gratitude for our family’s home and lifestyle is necessary for us to continue this important tradition of gathering for Thanksgiving.

When I sit down at our festive table and look at all my children and now my granddaughter, I count my blessings. In this time of violence and unrest, Thanksgiving brings me comfort and peace of mind, which I cherish.

Try our traditional turkey basting recipe!

1/4 cup of brandy (we use Christian Brothers) 1/4 cup white wine (We use Pinot Grigio) 1/2 tsp basil 1/2 tsp thyme Add amounts to taste. Pour over turkey before putting it in the oven. Baste often. Makes great gravy!
Distinctive Holiday Entertaining

Try something new this holiday season, with one of ShurSave's Delicious Recipes

Roasted Vegetable Lasagna

WHAT YOU NEED:
- 1/4 c. parmesan cheese, grated
- (26 oz.) jar fat-free spaghetti sauce
- 1 (15 oz.) low fat ricotta
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp. dried rosemary, crushed
- 12 pieces lasagna, uncooked
- vegetable oil cooking spray
- Semi-Sweet Chocolate, broken into pieces, melted and cooled
- 3 eggs
- 1 1/2 c. strawberries
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 pkg. (4 oz. each) BAKER'S
- 18 OREO Cookies, finely crushed (about 1-1/2 cups)

WHAT YOU DO:
1. Prepare lasagne according to pkg. directions. While lasagne is cooking, heat oven to 425°F. Coat a shallow metal roasting pan with cooking spray. Add mushrooms, squash, bell peppers and onion. In a small dish, combine vinegar, oil, garlic and rosemary; brush evenly over vegetables. Bake vegetables 15 min.; toss vegetables. Continue baking 8 to 10 min. or until vegetables are browned and tender. 2. Spoon 1 c. spaghetti sauce over bottom of 13 x 9 in. baking dish. Arrange 4 pieces of lasagne (3 pieces lengthwise, 1 widthwise) over the sauce. Cover lasagne with 1 c. sauce. Repeat layering with remaining cheese, roasted vegetables, 4 pieces of lasagne and remaining sauce. 3. Reduce oven temperature to 375°F. Cover lasagne with foil; bake 45 min. Uncover; sprinkle with mozzarella and Parmesan cheese; continue baking 10 min. or until cheese is melted and bubbly. Remove from oven; let stand 10 min. before slicing. Discard any remaining marinade.

Sausage Stuffing for Turkey

WHAT YOU NEED:
- 1 Tbsp. dried basil
- 1 large red onion, cut into eighths
- 1 tsp. EACH salt and pepper
- 4 carrots, peeled and cut lengthwise
- 1 head of garlic, peeled and cubed
- 1/2 head cauliflower, sliced 1 1/2 in. florets
- 1 sweet potato, cut into 1 1/2 in. cubes
- 1/3 c. canola oil
- 1/3 c. maple syrup
- 1 EACH red and green peppers, cut into large pieces
- 1 tsp. dried rosemary leaves, crushed

WHAT YOU DO:
1. Preheat oven to 450°F. 2. In a large bowl, mix dry ingredients with oil, maple syrup, peppers, cauliflower, sweet potatoes, squash, onions, celery, garlic, red pepper, sage, thyme and rosemary. Let the mixture stand for 10 minutes. 3. Thread the dressing onto the turkey. Roast the turkey according to the package directions, basting occasionally with the marinade. 4. Cover the stuffing with foil; store in refrigerator. 5. Slice the turkey and serve with stuffing. Refer to plating guide from the Mr. Food Test Kitchen ©2014 Ginsburg Enterprises Incorporated. All rights reserved.

Marinated Turkey Breast

WHAT YOU NEED:
- 1 3/4 c. marinade:
  - 1/4 c. apple cider vinegar
  - 3 Tbsp. soy sauce
  - 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
  - 1 Tbsp. brown sugar
  - 1 tsp. ground cumin
  - 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
  - 1/2 tsp. onion powder
  - 1 tsp. dried basil
  - 1/2 tsp. dried rosemary leaves, crushed
  - 1/2 tsp. salt
  - 1/2 tsp. black pepper
  - 1/2 tsp. dried oregano

WHAT YOU DO:
1. Stir the spice, rosemary, thyme and brown sugar in a deep non-stick dish. Add the turkey and turn to coat. Cover the dish and refrigerate for 3 hr. by turning the turkey occasionally to coat with the marinade. 2. Remove the turkey from the marinade. Roast the turkey according to the packaging directions. Slicing occasionally with the marinade, let the turkey stand for 10 min. before slicing. Discard any remaining marinade.

Coffee Pumpkin Bread with Coffee Icing

WHAT YOU NEED:
- 10 (8 oz.) Oreo Cookies, finely crushed
- 1/2 c. firmly packed brown sugar
- 3/4 c. all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg

WHAT YOU DO:
1. Preheat oven to 350°F. 2. In mini loaf pans. Bake at 350°F for 40 minutes or until toothpick inserted in centers comes out clean. 3. Add chocolate chips or cacao powder to the icing. Stir until combined. 4. Spread over loaf and mini loaves.

Mashed and Smashed Cauliflower

WHAT YOU NEED:
- 1 Tbsp. sour cream
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp. onion powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 1/2 c. heavy whipping cream

WHAT YOU DO:
1. Place cauliflower in a large pot and add just enough water to cover. 2. Bring to a boil over high heat; cover and cook 15 to 20 minutes, or until tender. Drain well and place in a large bowl. 3. Add remaining ingredients and mash until mixture is well combined. Refer to recipe for more information. Recipe and Image from the Mr. Food Test Kitchen ©2014 Ginsburg Enterprises Incorporated. All rights reserved.

Coffee Pumpkin Bread with Coffee Icing

WHAT YOU NEED:
- 1 pkg. (9 oz.) cake mix
- 1/2 c. coffee
- 1/2 c. butter, softened
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla

WHAT YOU DO:
1. Preheat oven to 350°F. 2. In large bowl with electric mixer on low speed until well blended. Spread into prepared pan. 3. Bake 20 to 25 minutes or until toothpick inserted in centers comes out clean. 4. Cool and spread with icing on cooled.

Maple Roasted Vegetables

WHAT YOU NEED:
- 1/2 c. maple syrup
- 1/3 c. canola oil
- 1 tsp. each: salt and pepper
- 1 lb. cauliflower, cut into 1 in. florets
- 1 sweet potato, cut into 1 in. cubes
- 20 brown sugar

WHAT YOU DO:
1. Preheat oven to 400°F. 2. In a mixing bowl, combine brown sugar, oil and spices. 3. Add remaining ingredients and toss until mixture is well combined. 4. Spread onto a baking sheet or pan lined with parchment paper. 5. Bake for 45 min. Stirring occasionally until vegetables are tender.

Our Best Chocolate Cheesecake

WHAT YOU NEED:
- 1 pkg. (8 oz.) cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 c. butter, softened
- 1 c. sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 tsp. vanilla

WHAT YOU DO:
1. Preheat oven to 325°F. 2. Mix cream cheese, sugar and vanilla with mixer until light and fluffy. 3. Add eggs one at a time, mixing on low speed after each egg is added. 4. Pour into prepared pan. 5. Bake 55 to 60 min. or until center is set. 6. Cool on wire rack and refrigerate at least 4 hours before serving. 7. Serve with whipped cream or fresh fruit.
Thanksgiving Day Wines
Pairing suggestions by Blue Apron

Zinfandel
Pairs with: Cranberry Sauce
Calling all cranberry sauce lovers. Like cranberry sauce, Zin- fandel is tart and sweet, and its spice brings extra life to the party.

Dry Riesling
Pairs with: Sweet Potatoes
Do you head straight for the sweet potatoes? Then make a bedine for a Riesling and its crisp autumn flavor.

Pinot Noir
Pairs with: Turkey
If you’re all about the bird, pour a glass of Pinot. Its berry fla- vor gets on famously with light meat, and its earthiness cozies up to dark meat.

Chardonnay
Pairs with: Mashed Potatoes
A battery tower of spuds yearns for a Chardonnay. Oaky Chards are like an extra drizzle of butter, while light, fresh Chards leave you with room for seconds.

Gewürztraminer
Pairs with: Pumpkin Pie
If the best comes last for you, the choice is simple. Have some Gewürztraminer with that pumpkin pie. It’s like dessert in a glass.

Petite Sirah
Pairs with: Stuffing
Is stuffing the centerpiece of your feast? Petite Sirah is for you. Its spice makes oh-so-nice with your family’s secret recipe.

Get ‘Gin’ the Holiday Spirit
Don’t spend all night bartending. For your next celebration, let gin please every palette.

Looking for one cocktail to please a diverse crowd? Look no further than gin. Contrary to its stuffy reputation, gin is the “it” spirit to infuse your 2017 holiday gathering with trendy pizazz.

According to HM Revenue & Customs, the U.K.’s tax, payments and customs authority, sales of the juniper-based alcohol rose by 12 percent in 2016 – a pace that is expected to be shattered in 2017. Need more proof? More gin is exported to the U.S. than any other country, which means you’ll be in good spirits, so to speak.

In an interview with The Guardian, Miles Beale, chief executive of the Wine and Spirit Trade Association, said, “The quality of the gin combined with the world’s love for brand Britain has seen British gin breaking records both at home and abroad.”

In fact, according to sales figures, gin is now more popular than it has been in a century. Much like the beer craze of a few years back, craft gin is leading the charge in its rising popularity, with new distilleries popping up constantly. Consider making your cocktail extra special by visiting or buying gin made from a local or regional distillery. If you visit the distillery, ask if they have any stickers, coaster or other swag to offer your guests at the bar to further personalize the cocktail.

For those new to gin, you’re in for a treat. It has a neutral flavor that is derived from grain or fruit and is infused with (or distilled a second time) with botanicals. The only gin requirement is the ju- niper. It offers extreme versatility and unlike some stronger spirits (tequila, bourbon) it tends to be a crowd pleaser. It’s also easy to use and there are simple cocktails that require very little know-how or additional mixing gear.

Need inspiration? Try this yuletide twist on a classic that’s sure to get any party started.

Orange Cranberry Gin & Tonic
3 oz. gin
1 oz. fresh squeezed orange juice
1 Tbsp. cranberry sauce
4 oz. tonic water
2 1-inch pieces orange peel

In a cocktail shaker, add gin, orange juice and cranber- ry sauce. Stir clockwise until combined. Fill a high ball glass with ice and pour the mixture from the shaker into the glass. Top with tonic water. Garnish with orange peel.
Basic Roast Turkey with Gravy

1 fresh/frozen, thawed 8-to-12-pound turkey
Salt and pepper
A few sprigs fresh sage
2 tablespoons melted butter or olive oil
¼ cup flour
2 cups chicken broth

Pat turkey dry with paper towels. Remove giblets from turkey cavity. Use for another dish such as turkey broth. Season turkey cavity with salt and pepper. Add sage sprigs.

Place turkey breast-side up on rack in roasting pan. Add ½ cup water to the pan. Tuck wings back. Brush turkey skin with butter; season lightly with salt and pepper.

Roast in preheated 325-degree oven, allowing about 2 3/4 to 3 hours for an unstuffed bird (according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture timetable; you may want to start checking the bird temperature after 2 ¼ hours). When a meat thermometer inserted in the innermost part of the thigh, not touching bone, reaches 165 degrees the turkey is done. If the bird becomes too dark before it’s done, place a sheet of aluminum foil lightly over the bird. Continue roasting.

Remove turkey from oven, when done. Lift onto a platter and tent with foil. Set aside 15 to 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, skim and discard excess fat from drippings in roasting pan leaving about ¼ cup drippings. Stir in flour. Place on stovetop burner over low heat. Cook over low-medium heat, stirring constantly until mixture is thick and browned bits are scraped up. Gradually stir in chicken broth. Bring to a simmer, stirring constantly until thickened and smooth. Season with ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper. Sprinkle with 1 teaspoon minced fresh sage if desired. Makes about 2 cups gravy.

Carve turkey at the table; passing gravy separately. Makes 10 servings.

Notes:
To thaw a frozen turkey allow 1 day (about 24 hours) for each 4 to 5 pounds of turkey in the refrigerator at 40 degrees, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service. A 12-16 pound bird requires 3 to 4 days.

Thanksgiving Menu Timetable

Cranberry sauce:
Make three or four days in advance. Place in container; cover and refrigerate.

Vegetable casserole:
Peel and trim vegetables a day in advance, place in containers; cover and refrigerate. Vegetable casseroles with a cream sauce can be assembled and refrigerated a day in advance.

Roast turkey:
Season and roast on Thanksgiving.

Stuffing:
Cut up bread and vegetables one or two days ahead and refrigerate (or freeze bread cubes well in advance). Bake stuffing alongside turkey.

Muffins:
Bake either on Thanksgiving morning or well in advance. If frozen, thaw muffins at room temperature, place on baking sheet and reheat in preheated 325-degree F oven for 5 to 10 minutes while the turkey is resting.

Pie:
Make crust a day ahead if desired. Thanksgiving morning roll out dough and fit into pie plate. Refrigerate while making filling. Bake pie while guests are having their meal.

Pecan Pie

Crust:
1 cup all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon salt
6 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
1 egg yolk
2 to 3 tablespoons very cold water

Fillings:
¾ cup dark corn syrup
½ cup maple syrup
3 eggs
1 cup sugar
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
¼ teaspoon salt
2 cups raw pecan halves

For pie crust, stir together flour and salt in large bowl. Cut butter pieces into flour using a pastry blender. Stir together egg yolk and 2 tablespoons water; sprinkle on flour mixture and gently toss to evenly moisten. If dough is dry, add the remaining tablespoon water and gather pieces into a ball, shape into disk. Gently fit into bottom and up the sides of 9-inch pie pan. Trim off overhanging dough. Make decorative pinches in top of crust.

Refrigerate while preparing filling.

In a large bowl beat together corn syrup, maple syrup and eggs. Beat in sugar, melted butter, vanilla and salt. Stir in pecans.

Pour into pie crust. Place on baking sheet. Bake in preheated 350-degree F oven for 50 to 60 minutes or until filling is slightly quivers and crust is lightly browned. Remove from oven. Cool on wire rack 1 hour before serving.
Seasonal Salads

Just because it’s the dark days of winter doesn’t mean there aren’t ample greens to go on your holiday table. Romaine, arugula, baby spinach and other great bases for salads are available at your local grocers year-round. Some greens, such as kale and Brussels sprouts, are in season during the winter and are likely to be cheaper and fresher than year-round greens. Here’s what to look for in a great winter salad.

Kale
This trendy superfood is great sautéed, roasted or toasted, but it’s also good in a salad. When choosing fresh kale for a salad, pick a bunch with smaller leaves; it tends to be more tender and mild in taste. Look for leaves that are crisp and moist without being wilted. They should be free of the tiny holes that are usually indicative of insect damage. Kale has a more robust flavor than iceberg, so go with big flavors in your salad. Balsamic, and lots of it, goes well, as do dried cranberries and fresh, seasonal citrus.

Brussels sprouts
Once a pariah of the plate, Brussels sprouts are having a moment in the sun and the salad bowl. Pick firm, compact sprouts with few loose leaves. They should be bright green, not yellow. Trim the stem ends, then shave with a Mandolin slicer or food processor, then treat like a cabbage slaw. For convenience, use a bottled coleslaw dressing, then throw in raisins or dried cranberries and walnuts for a crunchy treat.

Chard
Put a pop of color in your salads with the rainbow-hued stalks of chard. Pick a bunch with bright green leaves that are on the smaller side, then chop them finely and top with balsamic vinaigrette, dried cranberries, feta and pepitas for a delightful dish. Chard with white stalks is commonly called Swiss chard, but red and yellow chard also are available at your local fine grocer. Chard, like kale, is a big flavor in its raw form, so both lend themselves well to the warm salad, like this one.

WARM CHARD SALAD

1 tablespoon olive oil
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 bunch chard, chopped finely
1/4 cup chopped onion
10 mushrooms, sliced
3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
12 grape tomatoes, quartered
2 tablespoons crumbled blue cheese or feta
Salt and pepper, to taste

1. Heat olive oil in skillet and add garlic, cooking until fragrant. Add chard and chard and garlic and set aside.
2. Cook onion and mushrooms in the skillet with any liquid from the chard for about 3 minutes, then add balsamic vinegar and cook for 3 more minutes. Remove from heat and add mushroom mixture to chard along with tomatoes, cheese and seasonings. Serve warm.

THANKSGIVING from E1

These were times filled with traditions. First of all, my mom’s Thanksgiving meal was second to none. Her turkey was perfect. I long for a slice of one of her baked hams. I can still taste her cole slaw and her mashed potatoes and gravy and oh, her vegetable beef soup and homemade noodles was the best. And she could bake too. Apple pie, cakes, cookies, my mom could do it all. Her Christmas cookies were decorated so precisely that people were reluctant to eat them, despite being delicious. Mom’s detailed decorating of reindeer, Santas, Christmas trees, and more was remarkable.

Family life was somewhat different back then than it is today. We ate meals together every night, around our table, and we talked about our day and we enjoyed the food and the chat. We often had guests for dinner. And sometimes we went to their houses. At every meal, we gave thanks. My family continues this practice today. Yes, we like to watch football, although those rivalry games are long gone. And we enjoy a stimulating conversation. And the food is always delicious.

And as Thanksgiving winded down, Christmas would approach. My mom and I would make homemade garland to hang in our doorway. Red and green construction paper, cut into strips and taped together. Red and green, just like the Christmas lights on Main Street, our house and our town became a Christmas wonderland.

It would all come down to Christmas Eve. Kids would get to bed early to wait for Santa to arrive. We would always wake up early and run into the living room to see that big, beautiful tree on a platform with a Lionel train circling beneath. A Plasticville village would feature a gas station, a motel and a church, an ice skating pond, plus people on benches and streets with tiny cars. Around the perimeter would be presents everywhere, just waiting to be ripped open and enjoyed. The world is a different place today, but remembering our past and continuing those traditions makes us want to give thanks every day.

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10 Tips for a Smooth Thanksgiving Dinner

To prepare for Thanksgiving, Karla Brewer is signing up for a crash course covering the basics of preparing the meal. Never mind that she’s already taken this class a dozen times. “It’s the kick-off to the holiday season. That’s when the holidays start for me,” says Brewer, in the Chicago area. Whether you’re a novice, or like Brewer have a few roast turkeys in your culinary repertoire, getting into the Thanksgiving spirit can be easier when you get back to basics.

Don’t think you have to search out the hottest food trend (avocado toast is over). That’s not necessary or expected. Instead concentrate on what’s important – the foods that are connected with sentiment and nostalgia, says Shelley Young, founder, CEO of the Chopping Block, a Chicago recreational cooking school that offers classes that keeps food hot up to an hour, according to Shelley Young.

1. Use a wide-hole cheese grater to reduce cold butter to pea-size pieces for a piecrust recipe.

2. Opt for omeprazole or similar cookware that doubles as a serving piece. You get twice the function with only one dishwashing.

3. Avoid some of the last minute juggling to warm foods in the oven by baking side dishes in a French oven – a cast iron pot with an enamel coating that keeps food hot up to an hour, according to Shelley Young.

4. Save space in the large oven using a toaster oven to brown casseroles or crisp bread for croutons.

5. Keep mashed potatoes hot in a slow cooker set at low. Stir in a little butter or cream just before serving.

6. The weekday Thermos doubles to keep gravy or sauces hot.

7. A bigger bird may not be a convenience for the cook. Two smaller turkeys can roast in the same pan in less time than a mega-sized turkey, and guests can light over four, Not two, drumsticks.

8. In place of the roasting pan rack, cover the bottom of the pan with a layer of whole carrots, celery stalks and quartered onions. Set the turkey over the vegetables.

9. If you’re short on time pick up sliced vegetables from the supermarket produce department or salad bar. The extra expense may be worth it.

10. Accidentally burn the piecrust? Scoop out the filling and serve it over ice cream or layer with vanilla pudding as a dessert parfait.

By planning your menu in advance, you can cross appetizers off the menu as waste and ingredients you’ll need. Even if you’ve hosted decades of Thanksgiving meals, you may be surprised at what’s missing from the cupboards. The baking soda you intend for the biscuits may be two years old or maybe you lent your roasting pan to a neighbor who hasn’t returned it. Your guest headcount may require more dishes that you can buy or borrow.

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8. In place of the roasting pan rack, cover the bottom of the pan with a layer of whole carrots, celery stalks and quartered onions. Set the turkey over the vegetables.

9. If you’re short on time pick up sliced vegetables from the supermarket produce department or salad bar. The extra expense may be worth it.

10. Accidentally burn the piecrust? Scoop out the filling and serve it over ice cream or layer with vanilla pudding as a dessert parfait.

By planning your menu in advance, you can cross appetizers off the menu as waste and ingredients you’ll need. Even if you’ve hosted decades of Thanksgiving meals, you may be surprised at what’s missing from the cupboards. The baking soda you intend for the biscuits may be two years old or maybe you lent your roasting pan to a neighbor who hasn’t returned it. Your guest headcount may require more dishes that you can buy or borrow.

To prepare for Thanksgiving, Karla Brewer is signing up for a crash course covering the basics of preparing the meal. Never mind that she’s already taken this class a dozen times. “It’s the kick-off to the holiday season. That’s when the holidays start for me,” says Brewer, in the Chicago area. Whether you’re a novice, or like Brewer have a few roast turkeys in your culinary repertoire, getting into the Thanksgiving spirit can be easier when you get back to basics.

Don’t think you have to search out the hottest food trend (avocado toast is over). That’s not necessary or expected. Instead concentrate on what’s important – the foods that are connected with sentiment and nostalgia, says Shelley Young, founder, CEO of the Chopping Block, a Chicago recreational cooking school that offers classes that keeps food hot up to an hour, according to Shelley Young.

1. Use a wide-hole cheese grater to reduce cold butter to pea-size pieces for a piecrust recipe.

2. Opt for omeprazole or similar cookware that doubles as a serving piece. You get twice the function with only one dishwashing.

3. Avoid some of the last minute juggling to warm foods in the oven by baking side dishes in a French oven – a cast iron pot with an enamel coating that keeps food hot up to an hour, according to Shelley Young.

4. Save space in the large oven using a toaster oven to brown casseroles or crisp bread for croutons.

5. Keep mashed potatoes hot in a slow cooker set at low. Stir in a little butter or cream just before serving.

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Back to Basics, and Beyond!
Iconic holiday cookies – three classic doughs, nine amazing cookies.

By Matthew M. F. Miller
CTW Features

Since the holidays come but once a year, the cookie staples of the season leave little to the imagination and a lot to tradition. Chewy gingerbread, shortbread and jam-filled thumbprint are iconic bakes, and most bakers (and eaters!) have a preferred, tried-and-true recipe that evokes not only the taste of the holidays, but also memories of years past. After all, cookies are so much more than dessert. They are saccharine time machines that send you back to childhood one bite at a time.

Social media, however, has changed the game. Videos, pins and blog posts abound with innovative twists on holiday classics. There are so many options and too little baking time to try every recipe that whets the appetite, especially when you’re already committed to the basic three (or four for sugar cookie lovers!).

Here, I offer my favorite recipes for the classics along with two variations for each. Each variation uses the same base dough as the standard version, which means you can make one big batch with three very different cookie outcomes. It’s a simple way to try something new without disappointing your loved ones that cling to tradition. ’Tis the season to bake, eat and be merry.

**Shorthread**

Recipes and image by Matthew M. F. Miller

1 c. unsalted butter, softened
1/3 c. sugar
1/3 c. powdered sugar
2 cups all-purpose flour
¼ tsp. salt
1 tsp. vanilla

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Cream butter, sugar and powdered sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer for 2 minutes. Add flour and salt and mix until combined. Add vanilla and mix until combined. Using a rolling pin, roll out shortbread to 1-inch thickness. Cut into desired shape (I like 3-inch rectangles).

**Variation #1:**
Cranberry Coconut Bliss Shortbread

Roll out shortbread dough into a 1-inch thick rectangle. Cut into triangles. Bake at 350 degrees F for 20 minutes. Dip into melted white chocolate and sprinkle with coconut shreds, cranberries and white chocolate chips.

**Variation #2:**
Pecan Pie Shortbread Cookies

Scoop out 2 Tablespoons of shortbread dough and form into 4-inch piecrust shapes, building up the sides to hold in filling. Press down on the tops of the crusts with tines of a fork for decoration. For the pecan pie filling, stir together 1 cup pecans, 2 eggs, 2/3 cup corn syrup, 2/3 cup sugar, 1 Tablespoon melted butter and ½ teaspoon vanilla. Fill each cookie to the brim with pecan pie filling. Bake at 350 degrees F for 25-30 minutes.

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Makes a Great Gift!
Blackberry Jam Thumbprints

Recipes and image by Matthew M. F. Miller

1 c. unsalted butter, softened
1/2 c. sugar
2 eggs, separated
2 c. all-purpose flour
1 1/4 tsp. salt
1 tsp. vanilla
1/4 c. toasted almonds, pulverized
1 c. blackberry jam

Preheat oven to 300 degrees F. Cream butter and sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer for 2 minutes. Add egg yolks one at a time and mix until fully incorporated. Add flour and salt and mix until incorporated. Add vanilla and mix until incorporated. Roll 1 heaping Tablespoon of dough into a ball. Roll the cookie ball in the lightly whisked egg whites and then roll in almonds crumbs. Bake at 300 degrees F for 6 minutes. Remove from oven, push thumb into each cookie, fill with blackberry jam and bake for 12-14 minutes more.

Variation #1: Cookie Butter Thumbprints

Roll 1 heaping Tablespoon of dough into a ball. Roll the cookie ball in the lightly whisked egg whites and then roll in finely pulverized Biscoff cookie crumbs. Bake at 300 degrees F for 6 minutes. Remove from oven, push thumb into each cookie, fill with cookie butter and bake for 12-14 minutes more.

Variation #2: Orange Chocolate Cheesecake Thumbprints

Add 1 Tbsp. orange zest to dough thumbprint dough. Roll 1 heaping Tablespoon of dough into a ball. Roll the cookie ball in the lightly whisked egg whites and then roll in sugar. Bake at 300 degrees F for 6 minutes. While cookie is baking, mix 8 ounces of cream cheese with 1/3 cup powdered sugar, 1 egg yolk, and 1 Tablespoon of hot fudge sauce at room temperature. Mix until incorporated. Roll rounded tablespoons of dough into a ball and then roll in orange zest and finely pulverized chocolate chips. Bake at 300 degrees F for 6 minutes. Remove from oven, push thumb into each cookie, fill with cheesecake batter, top with orange zest and bake for 12-14 minutes more.

Orange Chocolate Cheesecake Thumbprints

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Cream butter and sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer for 2 minutes. Add molasses and mix until combined. Add one egg at a time, mixing until fully incorporated after each. In a separate bowl, combine all dry ingredients and stir to combine. Slowly add dry ingredients to the wet and mix until combined. Add orange zest and vanilla and mix until incorporated. Roll rounded tablespoons of dough into a ball and then roll in sugar. Bake on a parchment paper lined baking sheet for 10 minutes.

Variation #1: Chocolate-Cherry Stuffed Gingerbread

Bake a cupcake pan. Drop a rounded tablespoon of dough into the bottom of each cupcake tin and lightly press into the bottom and sides of the pan, forming a 1/2-inch crust up the sides to create a well. Place 1 tablespoon of mini chocolate chips and 1 chopped Bing cherry in the middle. Flatten out a rounded tablespoon of the dough and place over the top. Bake at 375 degrees F for 16-18 minutes. Sprinkle with powdered sugar when cool.

Variation #2: Gingerbread Lemon Mascarpone Cream Sandwiches

Add 1/4 cup flour to the original recipe. Lightly flour work surface and roll out dough to 1/4-inch thickness. Cut out shapes with your preferred cookie cutter and bake at 375 degrees F for 7-8 minutes. For cream, mix, 1-8 ounce container of mascarpone cheese with the zest of a large lemon, 1 Tablespoon of lemon juice, and 1 cup powdered sugar. Stir until combined. Once the cookies are cool, spread the cream on the bottom side of one cookie and top with a second cookie.

Baking Shortcuts for Time-Pressed Entertainers

This is the season for baking cookies, cakes and other treats. However, during the holiday rush it’s easy to get side-tracked or tired, and perhaps even a little bit overwhelmed at all the things to do in such a short period of time. Holiday baking doesn’t have to add to seasonal stress. With these several tips and shortcuts, there will be plenty of sweet treats for the family.

Stick with tested recipes

Although holiday bakers may want to branch out a bit with their culinary creativity, recipes that have previously been prepared with great success can take some of the work out of holiday baking. Preparing recipes you recall preparing in the past is much easier than trying something new. If it worked before, it probably will again. You’ll save time and perhaps even a little bit of money.

Embrace colored candy melts

Icing can be tricky to master. Simply heating colored candy melts and pouring over cakes or painting onto cookies can add festive appeal to desserts. Candy melts even come in many different colors and can be combined to achieve the tint desired.

Keep ingredients in top form

Don’t let poorly performing ingredients or lack of supplies be your undoing. Butter can be softened quickly in the microwave when needed for recipes. Eggs can be brought to room temperature by allowing them to sit in a bowl of warm water. Ensure that brown sugar stays soft by putting a piece of sliced bread in the container. Don’t forget to stock up on other baking staples, such as vanilla and almond extracts, baking powder, baking soda, and confectioner’s sugar.

Don’t bake from scratch

Recipe doesn’t have to be made from scratch. Boxed cake mix can be enhanced and turned into delicious desserts without much fuss. Substitute melted butter for oil, buttermilk for water, and add an extra egg for a rich cake. Mix in chocolate chips or nuts, or experiment with garnishes for a festive look.

Baking tips

Line cookie sheets or cake pans with parchment paper for easy dessert release and quick cleanup. Parchment paper and even aluminum foil can help lift cakes or cookie bars out so they look neat and do not stick. Holiday baking can be made much easier with a few tricks of the trade.
Billy Givens has been a long time butcher of Thomas’ Family Markets for 20 years now having stints in both Shavertown and then moving to Dallas when it opened in 2009. Billy is known for making all the holidays very special for all the customers of the Back Mountain. He takes special orders for all of the holidays and cuts all of his holiday traditions to perfection. Here he shares one of his favorite holiday recipes for Distinctive Holiday readers to consider for this upcoming holiday season.

RIB ROAST

INGREDIENTS:
- 1 3-to-4-rib roast of beef, approximately 8 to 10 pounds
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons freshly ground black pepper

PREPARATION:
1. Remove the roast from the refrigerator 2 or 3 hours before cooking.
2. Preheat oven to 450.
3. Rub butter on the cut ends of the roast.
4. Combine flour, salt and pepper together in a small bowl, and then massage the mixture all over the meat.
5. Set the roast, rib side down, in a shallow roasting pan (the ribs act as a natural rack), and place in the oven. Roast for approximately 20 to 30 minutes, or until the roast is nicely darkened. Reduce oven to 350 and continue to roast, basting every 15 or 20 minutes, until the roast reaches an internal temperature of 125 degrees (for medium-rare) on an instant-read thermometer. Remove the roast to a cutting board and let rest for 20 minutes before carving into either huge slabs or off the bone entirely and then thin slices.
Grishwold family Christmas vacation look or something more subdued and classic, it’s better to invest in higher-quality LED lights that are more energy efficient and durable,” Bridges says. “Try to use lighting clips, which make installation easy and are designed to work with not damaging your home’s trim. And remember not to create runs more than three strings long or to plug in strings of mismatched strength rated for different amps, which can be unsafe and short-circuit your whole display.”

Plan to spend anywhere from $50 to over $300 for effective holiday lights you hang yourself. Also, “plan out what you’d like your holiday lights display to look like before you hop on a ladder,” which can save time and prevent accidents, Bridges says.

For festive front door framing, consider adding a small decorative pre-cut evergreen tree, like a Fraser fir or Norwegian spruce in a planter, to each side of your door, which “sets the mood for your holiday festivities,” says Henriksen, noting that a pair can cost upwards of $50. “You can even borrow from elements of your front porch décor there,” she says.

“Make sure the colors you choose complement the door and the other colors of your home décor there,” Henriksen says. “We’re a big fan of sweeping garland on banisters and railings and over arches and doors, especially garland with poinsettia, sprays of holly or Ribbons woven in. If you’re looking for the real thing, choose fresh cedar bough garlands and greenery from your own Christmas trees,” Bridges says, advising that the bona fide stuff costs $50 and up and is enough material to drape a room.”

For maximum effect that resonates from your front door and entryway to your garden, get a pair of lanterns on a pedestal, which can save time and prevent accidents, Bridges says. “Let them be your front door framing,” she advises.

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To amp up the Yuletide spirit further, spread the garland along with the glowing lights from the door and porch to the path and driveway.” And, “consider adding a small decorative pre-cut evergreen tree, like a Fraser fir or Norwegian spruce in a planter, to each side of your door,” which “sets the mood for your holiday festivities,” says Henriksen, noting that a pair can cost upwards of $100.

Additionally, “play up your hibernating window boxes and planters with extra flair by tying them with greenery like amaranthus, magnolia leaves, juniper, cedar, boxwood and holly and by incorporating ribbon and bright red accents around them,” suggests Henriksen, who estimates this project to cost upwards of $50. “You can even borrow from elements of your own landscape greening.”

If you’re on a tight budget, consider a simple bit of DIY decorating. “It’s easy to save money on decorations by making them yourself and by stocking up on supplies throughout the year,” Zavala says. “Buy inexpensive red ribbon at a craft store and tie it into bows around your railings, posts, wreaths and lamp posts.”

Think outside the box, and outside the ice skating rink, too. “Consider reviving an old pair of skates by making them the basis of an outdoor planter or hanging them from your home’s light post. Custom décor can provide warmth and offer visitors a glimpse into your hobbies and interests,” Henriksen says. Be careful not to overdo these merry matings, however. “Avoid adding too many elements to your front entry, which should be warm and inviting and not cluttered or clausrophobic,” Gasior advises.

Locate live Christmas trees. According to the National Christmas Tree Association, 25.9 million real trees were sold in the United States in 2015. Trees put out on the curb for collection after the holiday season has ended typically end up in landfills, but some communities recycle Christmas trees each year. Real tree enthusiasts can contact community officials to determine if they can recycle rather than discard their trees.

The holiday season is a wasteful time of year, but there are ways for celebrants to dramatically reduce their carbon footprints between Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day. And, “prepare less food and donate any leftovers,” Zavala advises. "You should not be overlooked as part of your holiday decorating,” Henriksen says. "Regardless of the climate or region, festively festooning your home’s exterior should be front-and-center priority in December."

“In an attempt to bring a white Christmas to sunny southern California, we drape our front porch and bushes with snow-colored garland and hang icicle lights from the gutter and window downspouts,” says Megan Zavala, Burbank, Calif., a homeowner who spends at least $100 every holiday season to decorate her home’s portal. “Our guests love it – they say they feel as if they’re going to a party at the North Pole.” At minimum, devote attention to your door by hanging a wreath, sign or other holiday adornment. “Our guests love it – they say they feel as if they’re going to a party at the North Pole.”

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Oh, Perfect Tree!

Everything you need to know to pick out and decorate the best Christmas tree ever.
By Matthew M. F. Miller & Anna Sachse

Few holiday decorations are as symbolic of the season as the elegant Christmas tree. Lush, lovely and aromatic, it’s the focal point of the most wonderful time of the year, and not just because it’s the destination for scads of wrapped gifts.

“Real Christmas trees are symbolic of this season of giving and sharing and family gatherings,” says Tom Doll, a Christmas tree grower from Thorntown, Ind., and president of the National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA). “Nothing says Christmas better than the fresh scent, feel and texture of a real Christmas tree.”

According to the National Gardening Association, the most popular variety of tree is the Scotch pine. It’s upward-curving branches, perfect for hanging ornaments, and resistance to dropping needles makes it holiday favorite. Also extremely popular is the Balsam fir, which is tall and slender with ½-inch-long needles, which makes this aromatic tree perfect for tighter space. Other popular choices include the Douglas fir (big and full with longer needles); the Fraser fir (perfectly shaped tree with dark green needles that appear silver underneath); and the Colorado blue spruce with it’s iconic blush-gray hue.

“Whether you prefer to select a tree as a family at your local choose-and-cut Christmas tree farm, or choose from a variety of trees at your retailer of choice, the earlier the selection process begins the better chance you will have of finding that perfect tree,” Doll says.

When it comes to decorating your fresh tree, start by considering an overall color scheme, says Michelle Workman, a Chattanooga, Tenn.-based interior designer who has composed spaces for celebrities like John Travolta and Jennifer Lopez.

For traditionalists, traditional colors like red, green, white, gold and silver never get old. For a bold effect, Workman suggests trying hues such as fuchsia, chartreuse and turquoise. It can also be fun to create a theme, such as an “enchanted forest” with amber lights, pinecone garland, mini gold balls, owl ornaments and faux birds nestled in branches, says Nicole Sforza, freelance writer and former senior editor for Real Simple magazine. Either way, always start tree-decorating with lights, followed by garland and then ornaments, Workman says. Keep real trees away from direct sunlight, air vents, heaters and fireplaces to prevent premature drying and accidental fires.

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Before buying a tree, touch the branches. The needles should feel soft and supple, Sforza says. It’s also important that the overall color isn’t faded, the back of the outer twigs isn’t wrinkled and the exterior needles stay intact when the tree gets gently bounced. Fraser firs are one of the most popular options, Sforza says. “They shed minimally and have a classic, conical shape and strong branches that won’t droop under the weight of heavy ornaments.”

Stars and angels are classic tree toppers. For something more unique, consider faux antlers or a thick satin ribbon tied in a bow, Sforza says. Think birds, too. Workman uses a colorful faux peacock to top off her tree.

An average-size tree requires a stand with a base of about 20 inches in diameter, Sforza says, and it should hold at least a gallon of water. Only plain tap water is needed; do not add bleach, aspirin or fertilizer, which can actually reduce moisture retention and increase needle loss. Before securing the tree in its stand, cut one-half inch off the base. A fresh cut reopens the pores that take up water, Workman says. Embellish the base of a tree (and catch wayward needles) by draping the floor with an array of silk scarves in different patterns. Try luxurious velvet, silver organza or gold lamé fabric, Sforza suggests. Don’t forget that presents are the best Christmas tree accessory. “Wrap them in fun colors that coordinate with the tree and incorporate pretty satin ribbons and dangly bits to make them extra special,” Workman says.
Tips to Simplify Holiday Hosting

Hosting family and friends for the holidays is a tall task. According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, during the Christmas/New Year holiday period, the number of long-distance trips (to and from a destination 50 miles or more away) increases by 23 percent compared to the rest of the year. While many of those traveling will stay in hotels, many more will enjoy the hospitality of loved ones.

Holiday hosting can make an already hectic time of year that much busier, as hosts must prepare their homes for guests in the midst of holiday shopping excursions, office Christmas parties and social engagements around the neighborhood and at kids’ schools.

Holiday hosting does not have to run hosts ragged in the days leading up to guests’ arrival. The following are a handful of ways to simplify holiday hosting.

Plan menus well in advance of guests’ arrival. One of the more time-consuming tasks associated with holiday hosting is cooking. Hosts who plan their holiday menus in advance can get started on prep work several weeks before guests arrive. Choose dishes that can be prepared in advance and then frozen, so dishes need only be defrosted and cooked once guests arrive.

Let guests pitch in. Some hosts may feel obligated to cater to all of their guests’ needs during the holiday season. But many guests want to pitch in any way they can. If guests offer to do some holiday baking or take the family out for dinner during their visits, allow them to do so. This takes a little responsibility away from hosts while also allowing guests to show how much they appreciate the hospitality of their hosts.

Plan a night out. Another way to make hosting friends and family for the holidays less taxing is to plan a night out for everyone. In lieu of cooking at home, dine out at an affordable, family-friendly restaurant before taking everyone to a local holiday light display or bazaar. This gets everyone out of the house and allows hosts to showcase their hometown pride.

Rotate hosting duties. The holiday season is full of tradition, and some hosts may feel beholden to tradition and offer to host each year. But family traditions are about getting together, not about getting together in a particular place each year. Families who rotate hosting duties each year can ensure one member of the family does not feel overwhelmed time and again. And sharing hosting duties means someone new gets to avoid the hectic holiday traveling season each year.

Holiday hosting is an enjoyable yet sometimes difficult task. Fortunately, hosts can take steps to simplify holiday hosting without sacrificing tradition.

New Beginnings for Local ‘Rustique’ Owners

Step into Rustique, the gift shop that now calls Forty Fort’s 900 Rutter Avenue building home. Formerly located in United Penn Plaza, Rustique has transformed its new space into a winter wonderland of sorts. Sauter through the rustic front doors that were rescued from the beloved Hotel Sterling and you will not be disappointed. The shop features all the decorations and adornments you might need for high-end holiday entertaining and you will find it hard to leave without selecting at least a few unique pieces to incorporate into your home décor. Beautiful displays of tablescapes, Christmas pillows, restored furniture and exceptional gifting options fill the space that was formerly Leverage Gym.

The ambiance is festive and laid back – making for a delightful browsing experience on your holiday shopping tour.

After a surprise proposal at their Grand Opening party on Nov. 10, newly engaged owners Jamie Flack and Richard Eckman, and their dutiful staff, are on hand to answer all of your questions and help perfect your holiday entertaining design.

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Craftiness is cooler than ever thanks to the proliferation of social media. The biggest upside to the increased interest in DIY holiday décor, crafts and food preparation is cost savings. Whether a novice, expert or something in between, here’s how to create a festive home on a budget, so you can concentrate on the memories you’ll be making.

1. Double Up
“I try to use things that do ‘double duty,’ which means I can either use them for two holidays or I can eat them when finished,” says Tracey McBride, the author of the “Frugal Luxuries” series of books published by Bantam. She decorates with glass bowls of apples, nuts, berries or rosemary, then uses them in the kitchen later.

2. Pick and Choose
“Choose one room, or maybe the kitchen and one room, and choose one focal point to decorate and keep your collections together,” suggests Kelley Taylor, author of holiday-décor mainstay “Holiday Decorating For Dummies”. “Focus on one table or area or a fireplace. Don’t spread Christmas around the room.”

3. Take It Up A Notch
“I always like to elevate things when possible,” McBride says. “It gives something more prominence and makes it more special, and it doesn’t cost a thing.”

4. Get Crafty
“Take old ornaments, spray them a different color and sprinkle on some glitter while it’s still wet,” suggests Shelley Wolson, author of “Budget Celebrations: The Hostess Guide to Year-Round Entertaining on a Dime” (Filipacchi Publishing, 2009). She also cuts up the cardboard tubes from wrapping paper and covers them with fabric or paper to use as napkin rings.

5. Color Your Home
When purchasing artificial flowers, Taylor says it’s more economical to avoid poinsettias. “Look for the colors instead of what the flowers are,” she says. For example, roses and amaryllis can be used for a variety of holidays throughout the year.

6. Save Stuff to Save Cash
Think of creative ways to use leftovers. “Say you buy a box of candy canes and you don’t use them,” Wolson says. “Glue them around a coffee container or [other] container and you’ve got a really festive, cute way to hold flowers.”

7. Roop What You Sew
Wolson has a friend who turned her daughter’s first-year Christmas dress into a stocking. “That way she was able to keep the dress and it was a really neat way to hold onto it,” Wolson says.

8. Turn Up the Heat
Inexpensive white candles can be used any time, in any room, Taylor says. She keeps a drawer of them on-hand in her home. “They’re timeless and just make everything glowing and special,” she says.

9. Make A List, Check It Twice
“Keep a list of what’s leftover, what you can use for next year. Print it out and store it with the box of ornaments,” Wolson says. “While you’re in the season and in the moment it’s good to think of things you want to do next year.”

10. Head to the Kitchen
Create an idyllic holiday setting with a classic gingerbread house. And don’t stop at the house - think big. Trees, a village of gingerbread families, a flurry of snowflakes and a field of snowmen await you and your helpers.

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