

# Happy December Holiday Ideas



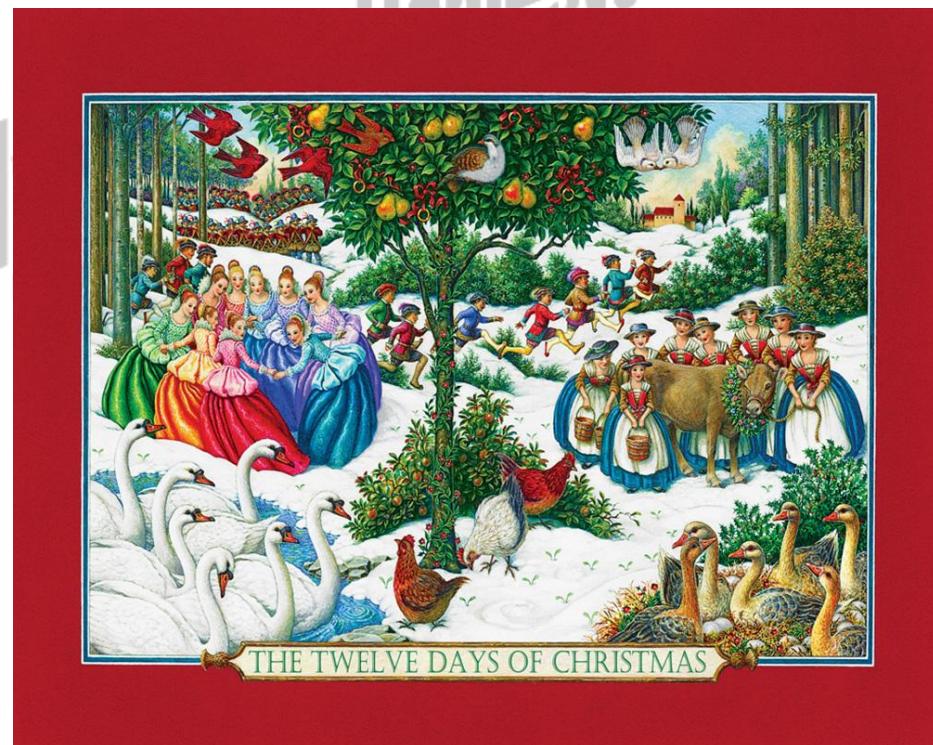
With my move and all this is a bit late, OK, a lot late! So the tips and ideas discussed probably have to wait until this time next year. Just consider this tid-bit as suggestions for a New Year's resolution.



Hanukkah (romanized transliteration Chanukah or Chanukkah), also known as the Festival of Lights and Feast of Dedication is an eight-day Jewish holiday commemorating the rededication of the Holy Temple (the Second Temple) in Jerusalem at the time of the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucid Empire of the 2nd century BCE. The festival is observed by the kindling of the lights of a unique candelabrum, the nine-branched Menorah or Hanukiah, one additional light on each night of the holiday, progressing to eight on the final night. The typical Menorah consists of eight branches with an additional raised branch. The extra light is called a shamash (Hebrew: שָׁמַשׁ, "attendant") and is given a distinct location, usually above or below the rest. The purpose of the shamash is to have a light available for practical use, as using the Hanukkah lights themselves for purposes other than publicizing and meditating upon Hanukkah is forbidden.



Christmas (Old English: Crīstesmæsse, meaning "Christ's Mass") is an annual commemoration of the birth of Jesus Christ and hence all that He provides us Christians. While the birth year of Jesus is estimated among modern historians to have been between 7 and 2 BC, the exact month and day of his birth are unknown. The original date of the celebration in Eastern Christianity was January 6, in connection with Epiphany and that is still the date of the celebration for the Armenian Apostolic Church and in Armenia, where it is a public holiday. The date of Christmas may have initially been chosen to correspond with the day exactly nine months after early Christians believed Jesus to have been conceived, or with one or more ancient polytheistic festivals that occurred near southern solstice (i.e., the Roman winter solstice); a further solar connection has been suggested because of a biblical verse identifying Jesus as the "Sun of righteousness", which places it around December 25th. Anyway this is a feast central to the Christian liturgical year, it closes the Advent season and initiates the twelve days of Christmastide, which ends after the twelfth night.



The Twelve Days of Christmas are the festive days beginning Christmas Day (25 December). This period is also known as Christmastide and Twelvetide. The Twelfth Night of Christmas is always on the evening of 5

January, but the Twelfth Day can either precede or follow the Twelfth Night according to which Christian tradition is followed. Twelfth Night is followed by the Feast of the Epiphany on 6 January. In some traditions, the first day of Epiphany (6 January) and the twelfth day of Christmas overlap.



Although both holidays have a tradition of gift exchange and foods, the root of both is spiritual and not the marketing and advertising consumerism of buy, buy, buy. It would behoove us to remember this.

For more interesting history on the winter holidays and traditions see “*Christmas Traditions and Prayer*” @ [http://formerlynmurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/christmas\\_traditions\\_and\\_prayer\\_new\\_site.pdf](http://formerlynmurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/christmas_traditions_and_prayer_new_site.pdf)



No matter what time of year or for what reason, gift giving is something that is bestowed voluntarily and without compensation; it shows we love or care for the individual receiving the gift.



I remember when this time of year involved making gifts for family and the friends closest to us. It was a time to contemplate the year as it comes to a close and plan for the new year. I still think this is the best way to celebrate the December holiday season.

Here are some tips for accumulating gifts for your special family and friends, without breaking the bank.

- Shop for wrapping paper and ribbon, etc. at discount stores and after Holiday sales and store in one place. I try to choose the kind of paper that does NOT necessarily go to a specific holiday or event so it can be used any time of the year for anything.
- Save scraps of wrapping paper or old cards for your gift tags. I keep a pair of pinking shears around just for this.
- Set aside a closet, trunk or even a plastic bin for accumulating gifts for the special people on your lists.
- During the year when you see something is just right for someone on your list, purchase, wrap and gift tag it with the person's name and put in the bin for you to use for a birthday, special occasion or holiday gift.
- If I get a gift that comes in a basket or some kind of different reusable container I save these for my homemade gifts. I also save fabric scraps that I use to line these containers.
- During the fall harvest I often purchase special shape canning jars and fancy labels and set these "special" canned items aside to make my own gift baskets out of.
- Of course those who can sew, knit and crochet can use these talents to create something for the special people on their gift list.

Now trying to find a useful gift for a person that is self-reliant or a "Prepper", that is affordable, may be a bit more difficult. It's not impossible, especially if you shop year round. For more details and ideas for these family and friends see "*Everyday & Holiday Gift Ideas for Your Prepper Family and Friends*" @

[http://formerlynmurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/everyday\\_holiday\\_gift\\_ideas\\_for\\_your\\_prepster\\_family\\_and\\_friends\\_new\\_site.pdf](http://formerlynmurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/everyday_holiday_gift_ideas_for_your_prepster_family_and_friends_new_site.pdf)

## Other December Celebrations

- Advent is the four weeks prior to Christmas (Western Christianity).
- Anastasia of Sirmium Feast Day - 25 December
- Bodhi Day - 8 December - Day of Enlightenment, celebrating the day that the historical Buddha (Shakyamuni or Siddhartha Gautama) experienced enlightenment (also known as Bodhi).
- Boxing Day - 26 December - Gift-giving day after Christmas.
- Chalica - A holiday created in 2005, in the first full week in December, celebrated by some Unitarian Universalists.
- Christmas - 25 December Christ's birth
- Christmas Eve - 24 December the night before Christ's birth
- Dies Natalis Solis Invicti (Day of the birth of the Unconquered Sun) - late Roman Empire - 25 December
- Dong Zhi or Dongzhi Festival - a celebration of Winter Dong Zhi is the thanksgiving of the Chinese calendar and is celebrated on the longest night of the year, when sunshine is weakest and daylight is the shortest.
- Hanukkah - A Jewish festival celebrating the miracle of oil.
- Hogmanay - Night of 31 December - Before dawn of 1 January - Scottish New Year's Eve celebration

## Happy December Holiday Ideas - Continued

- Holy Innocents' Day - 28 December
- The Iroquois Midwinter Ceremony is in either January or February depending on the moon cycle. When the new moon appears the spiritual year begins and five days after, the ceremony starts. The celebration lasts 9 days with a lot of traditional events, as well as choosing new council members for the next year. The Iroquois are one of the largest Native American tribes in history. As you may already know the Iroquois Confederacy is made up of six Indian Nations: Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora.
- Kwanzaa , (matunda ya kwanza, Swahili for "first fruits"), is a seven-day holiday that begins December 26 and continues through January 1.
- Las Posadas - 16 December -24 December - procession to various family lodgings for celebration & prayer and to re-enact Mary & Joseph's journey to Bethlehem.
- Malkh - 25 December
- New Year's Eve - 31 December - Last day of the Gregorian year
- Navajo Night Chant The Navajo are the American Indians native to Arizona and the rest of the south west. The most sacred of all Navajo ceremonies is the Night Chant which was first performed around 1000 b.c.e. It is celebrated in late fall or early winter for 9 days.
- Our Lady of Guadalupe - 12 December - An important honor of Mexico's Patron Saint before Christmas officially begins on December 16th
- Pancha Ganapati - Five-day festival in honor of Lord Ganesha. December 21–25.
- Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, this month is particularly sacred to Muslims because the Qur'an was first revealed to Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, during this month.
- Saint John the Evangelist's Day - 27 December
- Saint Lucia's Day - 13 December - Church Feast Day. Saint Lucia comes as a young woman with lights and sweets.
- Saint Nicholas' Day: 6 December

- Saint Stephen's Day - 26 December
- Saint Sylvester's Day - 31 December
- Watch Night - 31 December
- Winter Solstice - 21 December-22 December – midwinter
- Hopi Soyaluna festival (winter solstice) - The Hopi are one of the many Pueblo tribes. Their Winter Solstice festival is called the Soyaluna and is observed on December 22. Although a black Plumed Snake is the basic symbol of this ceremony it is not based on snake worship. It is one of the Hopi's most sacred ceremonies and is also called the "Prayer-Offering Ceremony" because it is a time for saying prayers for the New Year and for wishing each other prosperity and health.
- Soyal - 21 December - Zuni and Hopi Winter Solstice
- Mōdraniht or Mothers' Night, the Saxon winter solstice festival.
- Saturnalia - the Roman winter solstice festival
- Yalda - 21 December - The turning point, Winter Solstice. As the longest night of the year and the beginning of the lengthening of days, Shabe Yaldā or Shabe Chelle is an Iranian festival celebrating the victory of light and goodness over darkness and evil. Shabe yalda means 'birthday eve.' According to Persian mythology, Mithra was born at dawn on the 22nd of December to a virgin mother. He symbolizes light, truth, goodness, strength, and friendship. Herodotus reports that this was the most important holiday of the year for contemporary Persians. In modern times Persians celebrate Yalda by staying up late or all night, a practice known as Shab Chera meaning 'night gazing'. Fruits and nuts are eaten, especially pomegranates and watermelons, whose red color invokes the crimson hues of dawn and symbolize Mithra.
- Yule Winter festival - celebrated by the historical Germanic people from late December to early January.

## Traditional December Holiday Herbs

Many thanks to Rockport Herbies. You can read the original article @

<http://rockportherbies.blogspot.com/2010/12/december-christmas-and-winter-holiday.html>

Basil (Ocimum basilicum)	Love and good wishes, herbs of kings
Bay Laurel (Laurus nobilis)	Glory, reward of merit

**Happy December Holiday Ideas - Continued**

Boxwood ( <i>Buxus sempervirens</i> )	Constancy, stoicism, constant love
Cedar ( <i>Cedrus</i> ), fir ( <i>Abies</i> ), juniper ( <i>Juniperus</i> ), spruce ( <i>Picea abies</i> )	Living presence of the Holy Spirit, prayers ascending
Costmary ( <i>Tanacetum balsamita</i> )	Bible Herb, Herbes Sainte-Marie, fidelity  Costmary leaves were used to add spice to holiday ale, or wassail, in old Europe. Ivy and bay laurel were long used, along with other greens, to help celebrate the winter solstice in early Europe, with ivy symbolizing friendship and bay laurel as a reminder that the long winter would soon melt into spring.
Cypress ( <i>Cupressus sempervirens</i> )	Longevity, eternal life, mourning
Everlastings ( <i>Helichrysum</i> ): Celosia, Globe, Statice, Amaranth, Strawflower	Life everlasting
Frankincense ( <i>Boswellia sacra</i> ) and Myrrh ( <i>Commiphora myrrha</i> )	Christianity teaches that frankincense and myrrh were given by the Three Kings along with gold, as gifts to baby Jesus. They were once considered to be rare treasures.  Legend has it that both frankincense and myrrh were worth their weight in gold. Also yarrow <i>Achillea</i> , sometimes called the "carpenter's weed" because of its healing powers, is significant in the holiday tradition because of its association with Joseph the Carpenter. Today there is a blend of frankincense, myrrh and gold yarrow which is named "Potpourri of Three Kings".
frankincense ( <i>Boswellia sacra</i> ), Myrrh ( <i>Commiphora myrrha</i> ) and Pennyroyal ( <i>Mentha pulegium</i> )	All three of these herbs have been used as medicinal herbs for centuries.
Holly ( <i>Ilex</i> )	Reminder of the crown of thorns
Ivy ( <i>Hedera</i> )	Reminds us by its habit of clinging to a strong wall of our Human frailties in need of divine support
Lavender ( <i>Lavandula</i> )	The Virgin Mary is said to have dried her newborn's swaddling clothes by spreading them on a bed of wild lavender.  This herb, also of the mint family, grows as a small evergreen shrub. It has grey-green leaves, light purple flowers, and a sweet floral scent.
	When dried it can be used whole for wreaths and centerpieces or crushed to use in sachets for closets or drawers or to scent a bath.
Marigold ( <i>Tagetes</i> )	Mary's plant, friendship flower
Marjoram ( <i>Origanum marjorana</i> ) and Oregano ( <i>Origanum vulgare</i> )	Joy, happiness, kindness
Mint ( <i>Mentha</i> )	Lady's mint, eternal refreshment, wisdom, virtue
Mistletoe ( <i>Viscum</i> )	Eternal life springs forth in the midst of seeming death
Myrtle ( <i>Myrtus communis</i> )	Love, dedicated to Mary, symbol of virginity
Parsley ( <i>Petroselinum crispum</i> )	Mary's little finger, festivity, feast
Pennyroyal ( <i>Mentha pulegium</i> )	Manger herb, flee away

This perennial herb was said to have been placed in the manger on the night of the Christ child's birth and burst into bloom the moment the child was born.

English pennyroyal adds a fragrant aroma to wreaths but can be toxic if ingested, so keep it out of reach of pets and children. It is often used in potpourri and cosmetics and is native to southern Europe and western Asia.

*NOTE: Safety/Precautions for Pennyroyal which is a well-known abortifacient*

*Pennyroyal has been used traditionally to induce abortions. Pennyroyal is dangerous and has led to serious adverse effects and death. Therefore, pennyroyal should not be used for this or any purpose.*

*This is a medicinal herb and should not be taken internally for any reason.*

Pine (Pinus)	Longevity, eternal and vigorous life, friendship
Pot Marigold (Calendula Officinalis)	Mary's Gold
Rose (Rosa)	Purity, God's love expressed
Rosemary (Rosmarinus officinalis)	Mary's tree, remembrance, love, friendship, loyalty  One of the most beautiful and fragrant of the seasoned herbs, rosemary, according to folklore, will bring happiness for the coming year to anyone who smells it on Christmas Eve.
	Until the 20th century, rosemary was a very popular Christmas evergreen, right up there with holly and mistletoe. A gilded rosemary sprig was a treasured gift. Why it fell out of use is a mystery, but it is starting to make a comeback with the use of rosemary in holiday wreaths and rosemary topiaries as small Christmas trees. Perhaps the use of rosemary, which symbolizes remembrance, can help us to remember the meanings of our winter holidays.
	During the flight into Egypt, Mary spread her child's garments on a rosemary plant to dry. The flowers, originally white, turned blue and acquired the sweet scent they have today.
	Another legend claims that at midnight on January 5, the "old Christmas Eve," rosemary plants will simultaneously burst into flower in celebration of Christmas. Rosemary plants add attractiveness and fragrance to holiday wreaths and are especially suitable for tussie mussies, which are small bouquets made with dried flowers, doilies, and ribbons for use at individual place settings on the holiday dinner table.
Rue (Ruta graveolens)	Herb of grace, virtue, banishes evil
Sage (Salvia officinalis)	Immortality, health, happiness
Santolina (Santolina chamaecyparissus)	Great virtue, avoids evil
Statice (Limonium sinuatum) and Globe Amaranth (gomphrena)	Life everlasting
Thyme (Thymus), Wild Thyme (Thymus serpyllum)	Bravery, a manger herb This pungent herb, a member of the mint family, was collected from the fields outside of Bethlehem to make a soft bed for Mary during the birth of her child. It is thought

	to have antiseptic properties and was burned as incense later in history by the Greeks. Today thyme is a popular culinary seasoning but can be used in dried flower arrangements, bouquets, and potpourri during the holiday season.
Winter Savory (Satureja montana)	Interest, spiciness, manger herb
Wormwood (Artemisia absinthium)	Life everlasting, absence
Yew (Taxus)	Penitence, sorrow, sadness

*"Thank you Creator for all the opportunities You have provided me with this year. I ask only for patience, tolerance and understanding toward all that you have created and the wisdom to grow and live with it in the harmony and peace You desire."*

Amen

TNT

