

Tasty and lasting traditions

By Leanna Knox

During the holiday season everyone hopes to create times that are extra special and memorable for their family. Usually it is not the big things like the gifts and the holiday dinners that make lasting memories.

It seems that the little things which are done year after year are what make the holiday season truly memorable.

While every family puts their own unique twist on the holidays, many family traditions involve food in some way or another. Like many of us, a holiday ritual for one of my colleagues includes lots of baking. She starts baking in mid-November and continues it until just before Christmas. While some of the treats get put away in the freezer to serve on Christmas Day, the rest is enjoyed by her family as it is being produced. From the time they come out of the oven, these special treats of the season are enjoyed as desserts, tucked in lunch boxes and shared with visitors. What a great way to make the season last!

Someone else told me about a holiday custom in his household. Every year, he and his siblings would find a package of Pop Tarts in their Christmas stockings. Since these were not purchased in their household at any other time of the year, it was something that was eagerly anticipated to be enjoyed for breakfast while investigating the rest of the stocking contents and while opening their gifts.

My mother once filled a holiday cookie tin with her signature shortbread and gave it to a friend at Christmas time. Next year, the same container returned to her filled with homemade candy and the tradition was born. Every year the tin makes it way from one house to the other for all to enjoy – except that I think there may now actually be two tins spreading holiday cheer, so that each family has the chance to enjoy the treats each year.

In my own home, we have a few customs which we repeat year after year. One of these is a Christmas Eve tradition. Since my children were very small, we have

gathered in the living room by the lights of the Christmas tree for special snacks. While the snacks have evolved over the years, from apple juice and goldfish crackers when they were younger to more elaborate finger foods now, the sentiment has always been the same. It is a special time for the four of us to come together as a family to relax and celebrate the spirit of the season.

As children grow older and families change, these tried and true traditions may also need to evolve to fit the situation. Whatever the case, it is never too late to introduce a new holiday tradition into your family. Here are few ideas to help to get you started on creating lasting holiday memories for your family.

Start the day, and the holiday season, off with a special breakfast. A special breakfast treat on Christmas day is always welcome; however you do not have to wait until then to celebrate the season. Start advent season with something that is both easy to prepare and sure to make a lasting memory for your family. Prepare your usual pancake batter, but make small silver-dollar sized pancakes. Then arrange the pancakes on plates in a wreath shape and decorate with raspberries or sliced strawberries. This is a quick twist to a family breakfast that is sure to be a holiday tradition enjoyed by the whole family.

Set aside a day for cookie baking with your children. It is lots of fun and not only makes for lasting memories, but can also give a nice boost to holiday gift-giving. Kids love to share treats that they have made themselves with teachers, grandparents and their friends. Choose recipes that are quick and easy to prepare, and then get the children involved in measuring, stirring and decorating their treats. The recipe here for Candy Cane Fudge fits the bill. While grownups are definitely needed for the steps involving the stove, even small children can help to line the pan with foil, measure ingredients and crush the candy canes. Easy, delicious and lots of fun – certainly what holiday memories are all about.

However the holidays look in your family, it is the traditions that are repeated year after year that help to tie a family together. With all the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, it is nice to have these customs to help to focus the family on each other and what is really important about the holiday season. Wishing each and every one of you a happy holiday season filled with traditions new and old, and many happy holiday memories!

Candy Cane Fudge

398 mL (14 oz) can sweetened condensed milk

254 g (12 oz) package milk chocolate chips

254 g (12 oz) package mint chocolate chips

3 candy canes, crushed

1. Heat condensed milk in a medium sized pot over medium-high heat, stirring constantly until boiling.
2. Remove from heat and add chocolate chips. Cover and let sit for 5 minutes.
3. Stir until smooth and pour into an 8-inch square pan that has been lined with foil.
4. Sprinkle with crushed candy canes.
5. Chill until firm and cut into squares.

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