



Holiday Planning Checklist

November

- Streamline party planning by choosing menu items that prepare easily in advance. Plan menus now for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and any social events between. When you can see all that needs baking or cooking, you'll be able to plan time on your calendar that keeps you in the kitchen and right on time.
- Stock up on grocery staples for special events and your regular grocery needs when the price is right. You'll have plenty for both and extra whenever you welcome last minute guests. Back your food preparation out from each event date to give yourself maximum time to make anything ahead that does well with a little time in the refrigerator.
- When it comes to company, both expected and unexpected, be ready for meals in minutes by visiting a group kitchen to prepare a collection of delicious dinners to stock your freezer, ready to pull out anytime. If it's hors d'oeuvres and dessert you need, go for the best in boxes, bags, and jars. Sam's Club carries a huge selection of prepared items that will save the day and likely have a familiar taste for all.
- Organize your home before the celebrations begin and be prepared to welcome house guests at a moment's notice with a guest room ready long before they arrive. Put out fresh linens and bath supplies and include a small welcome basket of toiletries to welcome them home. Stock each bathroom with necessary quick clean-up supplies, including fresh seasonal hand towels, candles, and air freshener.
- Get holiday cards ready for a group assembly party Thanksgiving weekend. Take photos, write that letter, and buy seasonal stamps now. Then spend time a family signing, stamping and sealing to kick off the holiday cheer. Keep greetings simple and always include your personal touch with a hand signed card.
- Update your address book hard copy and online as you go and if you choose to send virtual greetings, make sure all email contact information is current.
- Start your shopping! Make your list, assign a budget, and get started before you find yourself tapped for time and cash. If you like to shop in person, comparison shop online and with store circulars to make sure you are getting the best deal. Ask if your store of choice will price match with proof. And consider using sites like www.PriceGrabber.com to calculate best bottom-line prices in your zip code. By shopping now, you can take advantage of retailer offers for both free shipping directly to the recipients as well as free gift wrap.

December

- Because we know you aren't likely done with all that shopping, take the pressure off now that you are in the zone and simplify gift giving by choosing signature gifts for certain groups, such as co-workers or teachers. While you are at it, purchase an extra ten to have in your gift closet, wrapped and ready to go for those situations you really wish you had something small but special in hand. From favorite ornaments to hot cocoa kits, a good bottle of wine or a holiday CD, the gesture will reflect you and your family and that alone is worth cherishing.
- Decorate early to enjoy the change in your home, rotating everything from pictures to furniture to accommodate the holiday of the moment. While you are decking the halls both inside and out, donate or discard any unused items that have run their course in your home, knowing that especially this year, you could brighten someone's home with your charity. Focus on the areas of your home that get the most traffic and add simple holiday touches that will keep the spirit of the season in the hearts of those who visit.
- If you celebrate Christmas, visit Santa between December 1st and 15th to avoid long lines and get everyone in the spirit as the countdown begins.
- Work hard to make family traditions come alive by baking and crafting for others. Plan for a Saturday afternoon of cookie baking, making for a cherished afternoon of family time in the midst of a busy social season. Involve your children in delivering any goodies made for gifts and most importantly, block out all the other distractions around you to enjoy this annual tradition.
- Cherish family traditions by making copies of holiday recipes, menus, party plans, and photos of decorations so you can enjoy and build on them next year. As the month unfolds, take pictures you want to scrapbook and have holiday meals that weave something in from every generation, reminding everyone how very much we all have to be thankful for.
- Plan ahead to enjoy seasonal field trips during holiday break, such as ice skating or visiting a local holiday light show. Save money by visiting local museums for special winter holiday exhibits and check out your local retailers for free activity nights or special performances at the mall. Check out your local Convention and Visitors Bureau for all the latest events your town has to offer and remember there are wonderful, free, entertainment options all over!
- Enjoy your family and know that you are blessed!