

## Reader Submitted Traditions

Christmas: We have lots, so I will share my two favorites. DS and I pick a name from the local Angel tree and I let him shop for that child. DH reads the Christmas story Christmas morning before we open gifts. by Carrotcake

I always loved the idea of new pajamas for everyone on Christmas Eve. I would like to start that one. by Brandy I have received some neat ideas, like choosing ornaments each year and then giving them to my son when he moves out on his own. Another neat idea is a holiday gratitude journal that says what we are all thankful for. I am trying to pull together some fun activities for like a winter solstice type tradition. Something, where we do something all together during the holiday season every year, but not necessarily on Christmas or Christmas Eve. by Sara

A Christmas tradition I started back in 1981 ( uh oh, I am really dating myself here) was to buy one dated ornament each year. I have quite a collection now. Two other things we do at Christmas are to drive around a few times admiring peoples lights and decorations, and also go to a gingerbread house display that the LDS Church sponsors. Some of the gingerbread houses are very elaborate. Both of those things are free, something us frugal folks appreciate! by megareader

I absolutely have to watch A Christmas Story. Ok, so it's not filled with sentiment or spirituality, but I just look forward to it every year. by jakiesma Christmas: We will put our tree up sometime over the next week (generally the day after Thanksgiving but that will not work for us this year). We decorate with UNBREAKABLE ornaments so I don't have to guard the tree careully from cats and children. I buy a couple of new ornaments each year though I must say I've a half dozen new this year (sale though \$.97 each). We open a couple small gifts (or at least ds does) on Christmas Eve, usually a Christmas story, christmas ornament, or small toy of some sort...) Then on Christmas we have a big dinner similar to on Thanksgiving (only takes a half hour to get a turkey stuffed an in the oven after all...and dh can make the taters later and I do the gravy...I make the pie the day before, low stress really). SStockings are opened first, there are always WAY to many gifts (yeah, I spoile 'em...though I DO shop on sale, and shop carefully to fit each individuals likes/personalities). DS has NEVER believed in Santa...but suddenly this year he WANTS santa to come...sigh...guess I'll have to change the tag on a package (I've already wrapped them) by pat123123

Santa Prints When the kids go to bed Christmas eve, DH goes outside and sticks his boot soles in mud. He brings in the boots and makes muddy prints on the tiles of our hearth in front of our fireplace (Clean the soles after, so the kids don't put 2+2 together). The kids wake in the morning and see the prints...proof that santa has come down through the chimney and visited our house. by Missy Don't have a fireplace? Take a spare junk key and string it on Christmas ribbon. Hang it on the front door to let Santa come in. My grandfather always used to make the outline of a Christmas tree on the wall with mini candy canes. They used other candy on the inside as decorations, and we all got to pick som candy off the wall. It was really great. I've talked it over with my sister (it's her home we celebrate at) and got the go -ahead to tape the tree to her wall. by Kimberly

When young, my kids thought is was so funny that I was mad because Santa left his messy boot pints all over the carpet. For fun Santa Prints "dip" boot into some baking soda and place the prints on your carpet. . All you have to do is vacuum it up and it deodorizes the carpet at the same time. ;) by Darlene

Our family is allowed to open one present on Christmas Eve and everyone knows what type of gift it will be. Everyone gets new pj's! After opening them it's a mad dash to our rooms to get them & then we spend the evening talking and looking at the lights on the tree while we listen to christmas music. Sure are alot of fun pj's out there suited to anyones personality. by Darlene

Ever since my kids were born the story 'Twas The Night Before Christmas by Clement Clarke Moore has been read to our children before they went off to bed. Now they are 20 & 21 and we still do this but my husband & I are the ones who go off to bed. Always makes me smile to see the 2 of them beside my husband, one on each side, being read to. Oh my,

not too many years until they will be continuing this tradition with their children. by Darlene

Another tradition our family has is to have a tree trimming party. We don't like to put our tree up too early for fear of Christmas overload, so it usually goes up about a week before the 25th.

We have a huge artificial tree that goes in front of the picture window and before our guests arrive it's been assembled, and lights have been put on. When our guests arrive (usually just family) the Christmas music is playing and warm hugs are passed all around. Over the years we have collected many ornaments so there are bushes to hang.

First the garland is hung on the tree, then everyone puts on the ornaments. We laugh, sing, share stories and snack on special appetizers. Last to go on is the tinsel, then we turn off the lights and ooh & ahh over it. Soon after dinner is served. I usually make a Tortellini & Spinach soup and serve that with a nice crusty bread. The soup is very Christmasy with the red it gets from the tomatoes and the green from the spinach. Dessert is Christmas cookies & homemade peanut brittle. by Darlene

On my husband's side of the family, there are 9 adults (4 couples and my father-in-law) and 13 children. We are a very tight-knit group and for years, we used to buy gifts for everyone. I started dreading the holidays because I knew we couldn't afford to continue the way we had been. So, I took a leap and proposed the unthinkable. I offered the suggestion of a family grab-bag. The adults would all throw their names into a hat, and pull one other person to buy for. Then, we'd throw all the children's names in a hat and each child would pull another child's name, and then they (actually their parents, but we let them think it's from them) would buy a gift for that cousin.

This slashed our Christmas budget by about 75% and we still felt good because we were still together and sharing and exchanging gifts with each other. Usually, you wind up calling the significant other of the person who you've drawn and that way, each person gets exactly what they want. There is, of course, a dollar amount for both adults and kids.

Even within our frugality, we got more frugal. We decided to add in a fun game at the end where we each put in a \$10 gift and then draw numbers. Whoever has number one chooses the first gift. They unwrap it and show it to everyone. Person number two can either steal the gift from number one, or choose a new gift. Person number three can steal from one or two or choose a new gift. And so it continues.

It is so much fun, and everyone steals and fights over the gifts they want. We try to be creative with these fun gifts as well. One year I made a "Movie Night" box and threw in a \$5 Blockbuster gift card along with a bag of microwave popcorn and two mugs from Walmart and two packets of hot cocoa and marshmallows.

There are always little themes involved, and it's just a lot of fun. So, it's a way that our close family can feel like everyone is being "honored" and we are having a great time in the process. by Amy

My fondest memory of Christmas as a child is when my parents would assemble all 8 of the children around the tree on Christmas eve and read us the story of the Little Match Girl. Mom would read the first half of the story, and Dad would read the second half of the story. I always cried when Dad read the part about the little girl seeing her grandmother just before she died, because my dear grandma had died when I was little and I missed her so. I still do. After my Dad died, and all of us kids had grown and left home, my mother gave me the book she and Dad read the story out of each Christmas eve.

When I became a mother of three little girls, I started the tradition with my daughters; only I read to them myself, as their dad wasn't interested. After a few years, I became a single mother and raised my children the rest of the way on my own. But no matter how many hard times we had, or how little I could or could not afford to buy them for Christmas, we kept up the tradition of reading them the Little Match Girl every Christmas eve. Now all of my daughters have grown and left home and created lives of their own. Last year for Christmas, my oldest daughter managed to track down 3 more copies of the same book that my parents and I used all of these years, and gave one to each of her sisters on Christmas eve. I was so touched by her gesture and felt so happy that now all three of my daughters have a book to carry on our tradition. By Mary H.

I have a unique Christmas tradition that we do in our home. Every present under the Christmas tree receives a number. We put the coordinating numbers in a bucket. Then the youngest child pulls the first number out. Whomever the matching number's gift it is gets to open it. Then that person pulls the next number out. And so on and so on, until all the gifts have been opened. By Tamara L

Christmas falls when it is just starting to get cold here in Texas. Every year, my children receive chapstick in their stockings. One year I forgot and there was a great outcry. The chapstick is the first thing they look for before opening any presents. by Sheryl S

My family always takes Christmas tree photos every year. It started years ago with my mom, dad, sister and brother and now each of our families has our picture made. It is so neat to look back over the years and watch our family grow. by Cornelia D.

My children each receive three gifts in honor of the three gifts the magi gave the Christ Child. by Sheryl S.

Our tradional family x-mas game brings our family very close together, we enjoy it and I hope by sharing...there will be other families who will enjoy.We get everyone together (including children)....usually during x-mas dinner/desert at the family table. Then we hand out the cards from the the card game UNGAME/reg. The cards each have a different "personal" question, ie: "what was your favorite Christmas?". or "Tell us about the meaning of Christmas tonight", "How will you pay-it-forward (anon.) this Holiday Season?" We have the BEST Christmas dinner's when we include this game and we learn things about family member's that we talk about all year! By Donna O.

A Frugal Christmas Recipe:

In our house, this has always been "little hot dogs in sauce" – wish we had a fancy name for it!

The original recipe calls for 2lbs of cocktail wieners – I realized last year that you can use 2lbs of regular hot dogs and just cut them into "cocktail wiener" size.

2lbs Hot Dogs (either regular hot dogs cut up or cocktail wieners)

1 jar of Yellow Mustard (don't get a fancy kind – plain old yellow mustard works best)

1 jar of Red Currant Jelly

Mix all three together in a pan on the stove over medium heat for 15-20 minutes, or until the mustard and jelly make a sauce OR put all ingredients into a crockpot on low for 1-2 hours.

This is not only very easy to make, but kids like using toothpicks to eat them with, and except for the currant jelly, I keep everything else on hand. I start looking in November for sales on jelly and grab a few jars. The generic brand works great! I can usually get mustard free or cheap with coupons in the summer and stock up. By Sara U

Our family watches the Muppets 'Emmet Otter Jug Band Christmas' first thing on Christmas Morning by Thomas C.

I am married (29 years) and have two wonderful daughters. Since they were born, I always made sure that the night before Christmas they were able to open one gift. It was always a nightgown or pj's etc. As they grew up, they looked forward to opening that "special" gift up. Now that they are grown / married and with children of their own, I make the grandchildren pj's or nightgown and still give one to my girls also. My oldest has carried this tradition on and just makes my heart swell with pride. by Lisa B.