

A Magical Old Fashioned Christmas

*Creating a
Magical Old
Fashioned Family
Christmas*

Christmas decorating tips, recipes and fun ideas for the whole family

A Magical Old Fashioned Christmas *It's Christmas Time*

The tree is up, scents of homemade cookies fill the house, lights are twinkling and everyone is in good spirits... Christmas has arrived.

Christmas is such a special time of year, even with all the rush of the busy season, last minute shopping and so much to do, it's definitely a magical time.

We've put together some Christmas fun and decorating ideas and tips to help fill your home with the magic of Christmas. You'll find old-fashioned Christmas decorating ideas, rustic décor, and special fun and treats for the kids... after all Christmas is really for the kids isn't it?

Many of us can't help but to feel like big kids ourselves during this time of year, playing in the snow, being mesmerized by all the holiday lights and that feeling in the air as though something special is about to happen... Christmas truly is a magical time.

We hope your home is filled with warmth and happiness this Christmas.

An Old-Fashioned Casual Christmas Feel

This is the type of Christmas that reminds you of a different era, times when families gathered around to enjoy the simple pleasures of life and the holiday season.

This type of Christmas isn't pretentious or about everything being "just right"; it's pared down with home-spun decorations, a mix and match feel and all about filling your home with a welcoming, homey feel.

An old-fashioned Christmas is perfect when you have kids and will create many lasting memories.

A Magical Old Fashioned Christmas Decorating the Tree

"It's not a bad little tree, really," Linus said. He wrapped his blanket around its base. "It just needs a little love." A Charlie Brown Christmas

Hopefully you won't have to work your magic on a scrawny little tree like the Peanuts gang. We suggest finding the biggest tree (real of course) you can get your hands on. Dress it in old-fashioned, home-made decorations and gingham ribbons.

When it comes to creating a traditional, old-fashioned Christmas tree go for simplicity and homey decorations. The kids can take part in helping make homemade decorations and putting them up on the tree.

Here are a few decoration ideas:

Make popcorn and string it for an old fashioned feel.

Find star shaped pretzels (available at many supermarkets) and hang from the tree with ribbons.

Candy canes look great on the tree and are yummy to eat too.

Get some decorative felt and help your kids cut out simple shapes like stars or hearts. Sew two similar pieces together and add cinnamon sticks or potpourri in the center.

Wooden and rustic decorations create a magical feel, go for angels or stars for an extra special touch.

You can gather a few cinnamon sticks and berry branches together with raffia ribbon and hang on the tree.

Add clear white lights (still is best) for a traditional effect.

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Decorating the House

If you're lucky enough to have a real fire with a mantle, take advantage of this wonderful feature and decorate the mantle with berry laden branches, pine cones and tea lights in an assortment of containers and colors.

You can also turn a windowsill into your center piece, add lanterns of different shapes and sizes with tea lights, garland and pine cones.

Fill clear vases with walnuts, pine cones, candy canes or brightly wrapped candies.

Hang up Christmas cards from festive ribbons and add small wooden decorations between the cards.

Use old fashioned knitted stockings and fill with all sorts of traditional goodies.

Make presents extra special by wrapping with gingham ribbons and personalizing with a named stamp. Use raffia ribbon and candy canes for a homey feel.

Make a twig tree, Push thin branches into a galvanized bucket and fill with sand. Add wooden decorations and festive ribbons.

Don't forget to hang mistletoe and holly, tie together with ribbons.

Create a rustic garland for your banister by mixing traditional garland and eucalyptus leaves, add some clear lights for a twinkling touch.

Play quiet Christmas music and don't forget the traditional Christmas movies.

Mix pine cones and decorative Christmas balls in a clear bowl for a rustic display.

Burn bunches of lavender in your fire for a wonderful scent.

Tie sprigs of eucalyptus with a wooden decoration or pine cone to door handles with gingham ribbon for a welcoming smell and look.

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Ahhh... and there is nothing that says Christmas more than the smell of homemade baking. Gather everyone around and bake some delicious Christmas treats. Don't worry if everything isn't picture perfect, let the kids roll up their sleeves and get involved, they'll have a blast. Try the recipes included at the end of this book!

Set the table in a simple but festive theme, use white or red linen and add mismatched bowls and serving dishes for a casual feel.

Create your own centerpiece using pine cones and Christmas scented candles.

Scatter tea lights and berry sprigs throughout the table for a festive, relaxed feel.

And remember part of Christmas is indulgence so set out a special cheese tray, assortment of cakes and nibbles for your guests and don't forget the drinks.

Don't Forget the Outside of Your House

Fill empty jam jars a third full with fresh cranberries and add a white candle to each jar. Line them up by your front door. You can also have several different sized lanterns.

Add a homemade eucalyptus or berry twig wreath to your front door with sparkly lights and tie ribbons on your holiday plants.

Use outdoor lights to add a special twinkle, you can even find mesh lights which you throw over your plants.

Add some bows to a few outdoor potted plants and place on your porch.

And remember to greet your guests with a big welcoming smile and a warm drink in hand.

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Fun Christmas Things Kids Can Do

Homemade cards – gather an assortment of construction paper, pens, markers, stamps and other art items and let your kids make their own Christmas cards this year. Personalize cards by adding a special photograph.

Old-Fashioned Paper Chains – Cut strips of colourful construction paper and glue together in a loop. Insert the other strip through the first loop, glue together and continue!

Homemade Gifts – Use empty clean jam jars and fill with an assortment of festive candies. Try old fashioned peppermints or candy canes. Cover the lid with a festive cut out fabric and warp with a ribbon. Add a homemade card.

Cookie Decorating – Let the kids help make a batch of Christmas cookies and let them decorate the cookies themselves, this is one activity they'll really enjoy.

Christmas mobile – Cut a selection of shapes like stars and doves from colourful felt and construction paper. Hang with ribbons.

Letter to Santa – Write and decorate a special letter to Santa, not only asking for gifts but also saying what things they've been most grateful for this year. Take a walk to the post box and mail it out.

Christmas movie – Choose a special Christmas movie, it could be a classic like "Miracle on 34th Street" or "A Charlie Brown Christmas", make a big bowl of homemade popcorn, let everyone curl up with their favorite blankets and enjoy.

Help a Local Charity – Christmas is about giving as well as receiving. This is a great time to help your kids wrap some presents or put some food baskets together and deliver them to your local nursing home or charity.

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Outdoor Fun for Kids

Just because it's cold out doesn't mean the kids can't go out there and have fun. Bundle everyone up in warm clothing and go for a Christmas walk, look at the different decorations and lights or just enjoy the season around you.

Go on a holiday scavenger hunt, write down things each child is suppose to see on your walk out. You can include things like pine cones, Christmas lights or winter birds. Make it appropriate for the child's age and then get out there and have fun.

Find a traditional outdoor ice skating ring. These are so much fun at Christmas, enjoy a long skate, Christmas music and some hot chocolate afterwards.

Go to a Christmas concert or nativity play. Find a local caroling concert or Christmas play for a fun family day out.

Make special treats for the wild birds in your back garden. Tie peanuts together with festive ribbon and hang from tree branches. Hang fat balls from festive ribbons and string apples together.

Make snow angels or a trail of foot prints, and make sure mom and dad get involved too!

And after all that fun, come back indoors for a hot drink and a special Christmas snack.

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Easy Christmas Recipes

This year why not try a festive Mulled Wine, here's an easy recipe:

- 2 bottles of red wine (doesn't have to be expensive as the taste will be altered)
- 2 ounces of brandy
- 2 tablespoons Watkins Traditional Cider Brew
- 2 lemons
- 2 oranges
- 1/2 cup sugar

Wash and cut lemons and oranges into slices (with peel on). Place wine in a large pan and slowly simmer (do not bring to a boil) Add cut lemons, oranges, brandy, spices and sugar. Leave to simmer approximately 20 minutes. Serve warm in mugs or glasses.

And for the kids a hot chocolate with marshmallows always goes down well!

Hot Chocolate

Ingredients:

- 4 cups milk
- 1/4 cup Watkins cocoa powder
- 1/4 - 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon Watkins Vanilla
- Whipped cream and/or miniature marshmallows

In a large saucepan, combine cocoa powder and sugar, gradually whisk in milk. Place over medium heat and bring to a simmer, whisking constantly. Add vanilla and whisk the hot chocolate is frothy.

Pour into 4 mugs and top with whipped cream, miniature marshmallows or both!

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Christmas Morning French Toast

Ingredients: Watkins Cooking Spray

1/2 (1 pound) loaf French bread, cut diagonally in 1 inch slices
4 eggs
1 cup milk
3/4 cup half-and-half cream
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon Watkins vanilla extract

Topping:

1 tablespoon and 1-1/2 teaspoons light corn syrup

1/4 cup butter

2/3 cup brown sugar

1 teaspoon Watkins Maple Extract

Directions: Spray a 9x13 inch baking dish with Watkins cooking spray. Arrange the slices of bread in the bottom. In a large bowl, beat together eggs, milk, cream, vanilla and cinnamon. Pour over bread slices, cover, and refrigerate overnight.

The following morning, preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a small saucepan, combine butter, brown sugar and corn syrup; heat until bubbling, stir in maple extract. Pour over bread and egg mixture. Bake in preheated oven, uncovered, for 40 minutes.

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Applesauce Cranberry Muffins

Ingredients:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon Watkins ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 egg (lightly beaten)
- 1/3 cup Watkins Original Grapeseed oil
- 1 cup unsweetened applesauce
- 1 cup fresh or frozen cranberries, chopped into smaller pieces
- 1/2 cup pecans chopped

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350F. Lightly grease the muffin tin. In a large bowl mix together the flour, sugar, baking soda, salt and cinnamon. In a separate bowl mix the eggs, applesauce and oil. Add the applesauce mixture to the dry ingredients and mix together gently (do not over mix).

Gently fold in cranberries and scoop mixture into muffin cups until 2/3 full. Bake at 350F for approximately 30 minutes. Cool for 5 minutes before removing from pan.

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Cinnamon Apple Bread

Ingredients:

- 2 1/2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon Watkins cinnamon
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup butter (melted)
- 1 egg (beaten)
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 teaspoon Watkins vanilla
- 1 cup peeled, chopped apples
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans (optional)

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350F. In a large bowl combine flour, baking soda, salt, sugar and cinnamon. Add melted butter, egg, milk and vanilla. Mix well. Fold in chopped apples, raisins and pecans (if using). Pour batter into a lightly greased loaf pan. Top with chopped pecans (if using). Bake at 350F for approximately 45 minutes or until center is baked through. Cool for 10 minutes in pan before removing to wire rack to cool completely.

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Easy Cinnamon Rolls

Ingredients:

- 1 loaf frozen bread dough, thawed
- 2/3 cups brown sugar
- 4 tablespoons melted butter
- 1 teaspoon Watkins ground cinnamon
- 1/3 cup heavy cream
- 2/3 cup sifted powdered sugar
- 1 tablespoon milk
- 1/2 teaspoon Watkins vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts or pecans

Directions:

Roll dough into a rectangle shape and brush with the melted butter. In a large bowl, combine sugar, cinnamon and chopped nuts then layer over dough. Then starting with the long end roll the dough up into a log. Moisten edges with a little water to seal.

Then cut roll into slices. Place rolls into lightly buttered cake pans and set aside at room temperature. Allow to rise for approximately 1 _ hours (dough will have doubled). Finally pour the heavy cream over rolls and bake at 350F for approximately 25 to 30 minutes.

Combine sugar, milk and vanilla and drizzle over rolls during the last 5 minutes of baking.

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Festive Christmas Bread

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 2/3 cups brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons Watkins baking powder
- 2 eggs
- 1/3 cup butter
- 1/2 cup chopped nuts
- 1 jar (10 ounce size) maraschino cherries

Directions:

Drain cherries and reserve 4 tablespoons juice. Roughly chop cherries and set aside. In a large bowl combine flour, baking powder and salt and mix well. In a separate bowl cream together butter, sugar, eggs and the 4 tablespoons cherry juice. Mix well until fully combined. Add the butter and sugar mix to the flour mixture and mix well. Then gently fold in chopped cherries and nuts.

Lightly grease a 9-inch loaf pan and scoop batter into pan, spread evenly.

Bake bread in a preheated oven at 350F for approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour or until golden and baked through. Remove from pan and cool on wire rack for 15 minutes.

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Snow Drop Cookies

Ingredients

- 1 cup butter
- 1/2 cup sugar (powdered and sifted)
- 1 teaspoon Watkins vanilla
- 2 1/2 cups flour (sifted)
- 1/4 teaspoon Salt
- 3/4 cup chopped pecans

Directions:

Cream butter and sugar in a large bowl and mix in vanilla. Sift flour and salt together and add to the sugar mixture. Gently fold in the chopped pecans. Shape mixture into golf ball sized balls. Place on an ungreased cookie sheet and bake for approximately 15 minutes at 350F or until baked through and slightly golden.

While cookies are baking place a little extra powdered sugar in a bowl. Once the cookies are done baking roll through the sugar and set aside to cool.

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Spiced Apple Muffins

Ingredients:

- 2 cups all purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon Watkins baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon Watkins cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon Watkins nutmeg
- 2/3 cup brown sugar
- 2 eggs (beaten)
- 2/3 cup milk
- 1/4 cup butter (melted)
- 1 cup peeled and grated/shredded apple
- 1/4 cup chopped walnuts (optional)

Directions:

In a large bowl sift together the flour, baking powder, salt, cinnamon and nutmeg. Mix in brown sugar. In a separate bowl, combine eggs, milk and butter. Mix well. Add egg mixture to flour mixture and mix (do not over mix). Fold in apples and walnuts (if using). Spoon batter into lightly greased muffin pan.

Bake in preheated oven at 350F for approximately 20 minutes or until golden and baked through. Let cool in pan for 5 minutes before removing to wire rack to cool completely.

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Stained Glass Cookies

* This recipe is a lot of fun to make with the kids and the cookies look great once they're baked. You can use them to decorate the tree or just display them in a nice bowl or of course just eat them!

Ingredients:

- 3 cups sifted flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup butter (melted)
- 1/3 cup honey
- 1/2 cup water
- Brightly colored hard candies, lifesavers work well
- Cookie cutters in small & large sizes

Directions:

Mix the butter, sugar and honey in a large bowl and add water, mix until smooth. Combine the salt, baking soda and sifted flour in a large bowl. Add butter mixture to flour mixture and knead the dough a little with your hands. Wrap up roll in cling film and place in freezer for approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

While the dough is chilling unwrap a selection of round hard candies and set aside.

Once the dough is ready roll it on a lightly floured surface and cut out shapes using the large cookie cutters. Using the tip of a knife cut out a circle in the center of the cookie to approximately fit the hard candy or use a small cookie cutter. If you're cookie is meant to be an ornament make a hole at the top using a straw.

Bake at 350F for approximately 6 to 8 minutes or until lightly golden, remove from oven and allow to cool for a few minutes. Place the hard candy in the center of cookie and bake for another minute or so (just until the candy slightly starts to bubble). Remove from oven and allow to cool completely before displaying or eating.

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Italian Anise Cookies (Angelonies)

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 cup shortening
- 1 1/2 cup sugar
- 4 eggs, beaten
- 1 teaspoon Watkins anise extract
- 1 teaspoon Watkins lemon extract
- 1 teaspoon Watkins vanilla extract
- 4 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons Watkins baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda

Frosting:

- 2 cups confectioners' sugar
- 2 tablespoons milk, more as needed
- 1 teaspoon any of extracts
- Nonpareils or Watkins Holiday Sprinkles

Directions:

Melt shortening and butter and cool. Mix eggs, sugar, anise, lemon and vanilla. Blend in melted shortening. Add flour, baking powder and baking soda.

Mix well until it forms a soft dough. Dough will be easier to work with when cool. Place spoonful on cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 15-20 minutes.

Mix confectioners' sugar, milk and extract to form desired consistency and drizzle on warm cookies. Sprinkle with nonpareils while still warm.

These Italian cookies are traditionally served at Easter and Christmas time.

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Greek Christmas Bread

Ingredients

- 1 package (or 1 tablespoon) of active dry yeast
- 1/2 cup of warm water
- 1/3 cup of sugar
- 1 teaspoon of Watkins ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon of salt
- One egg
- 1/2 cup of milk
- 1/2 cup of Watkins original Grapeseed oil
- 1 3/4 cups of whole wheat flour
- 1 cup of all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup of golden raisins
- 1/2 cup of chopped walnuts

1) Dissolve the yeast in the warm water. Combine the sugar, cardamom, salt, egg, milk and oil in a large bowl. Mix well. Add the yeast mixture, flours, raisins and nuts; mixing well. Add enough extra flour to make the dough soft. Turn the dough onto a floured surface and knead until it becomes smooth and elastic. This will take about 5 minutes.

Next, shape the dough into a round loaf. Put the dough into a lightly oiled 8-inch-round cake pan. Cover with a damp towel and let rise in a warm place (until doubled in bulk). This takes about one hour.

Bake the bread in a 350-degree oven for 35 to 40 minutes, or until it browns.

Merry Christmas!

With a little thought and imagination you can create a wonderful Christmas mood in your home. This is a time of year of warmth and good wishes and with your festive home, there is no doubt your friends and relatives will feel welcomed, enjoy your Christmas.

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