

AoH Holiday Homemaking 2021_Ep4_Karen H_Gayle_Judy_Teri - 12...

Mon, 12/20 1:17PM 50:50

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

christmas, gifts, recipe, home, homemakers, holiday, tree, presents, year, season, christmas season, cookies, husband, wrapping, record, special, notes, family, advent, jot

SPEAKERS

Allison, Karen Holmes, Teri, Judy Watters, Gayle

A Allison 00:03

Merry Christmas, homemakers. Welcome to the Art of home podcast holiday homemaking 2021, where we are exploring how homemakers cultivate a place to belong as we celebrate the season of giving. I'm your host Allison weeks. I'm a wife. I'm a mom to four grown kids and I've been practicing the art of home for nearly 30 years. As we draw closer to Christmas Day we continue to reflect on the themes of Advent. This week's theme is love. And while we finish up our final preparations, wrapping gifts baking cookies, singing carols, let us draw near to the one who is love. The one whose love for us is perfect. The one who sent the greatest gift of all, not because we loved him, but because He first loved us. You can follow along with our simple Advent daily readings and songs over on Instagram at the art of home podcast. We also had Advent playlist for each theme, as well as a family friendly playlist called Christmas fun that would make great background music at your festival gatherings. We will link all of those in the show notes. We have a great show for you today to wrap up our 2021 holiday home baking season. You'll hear from four more familiar homemaker voices as we discuss gifts, food, bows, traditions and more. If you are intrigued by these holiday stories of home, make sure you go back and listen to the full interviews of these homemakers where they share about all their experiences as homemakers over the long haul. Links will be in the show notes. So whether you are decorating cookies or running out for last minute gifts, we know you will enjoy these holiday stories of home. Okay, I'm back with my friend Karen Holmes, and we're going to talk about Christmas. So, what does a typical Christmas day look like in your house?

K Karen Holmes 01:51

Chaos. You know, Families always talk about traditions. And we really didn't have a lot of traditions. Because we live so far from our parents and wanting to spend Christmas with them, we always went to them for Christmas. So we didn't have a whole lot of traditions. But opening presents on Christmas morning was the big deal. And so that was probably our main thing. My husband grew up opening presents on Christmas Eve. And I kind of hijacked that. And we did it Christmas morning. But it was total chaos. I mean, my family. We came down the stairs,

ran into living room started opening presents. Everybody did it all at once. We're like, oh, look what you got! It was just chaos. Yeah, I loved it. It was awesome. Don's family did one present at a time. And everybody opened a present so that everybody got the spotlight during you know, and I was like, and it takes like three hours- five hours later -you know the last present is opened I'm like I can't do this I cannot do this I don't have that the attention span. So we ripped into the presents and Don would sit there and go, "This is so sad, nobody..." and I said, "Everybody is sharing what they got." Yeah, awesome. They're screaming and laughing you know? And so anyway, so it's it's pretty much chaos now it's changed a lot because you know we don't have a lot of kids at home

A

Allison 03:20

different stage. Yeah, different stage. What about food? So what do you guys eat? Do you have a traditional?

K

Karen Holmes 03:26

Its traditional and my kids now as adults say, "Mom, don't try to do anything funky." Turkey dressing you know, and they they have their list of what we do and and one year I said why don't we "Why don't we do brisket." "Mom No, we can't do brisket. We have to do you know Turkey." What what are we in ham and so we do we do the turkey the ham the dressing, you know and the fixings that go along with it. And my youngest daughter likes the broccoli salad with the raisins in it, you know? And she says, "Mom, that stuff is crack. I get so addicted on it." And she's so funny. She said when he or she goes don't make don't make the crack mom. I said you've got to quit calling it that, cuz people are gonna really think that yeah. And she said, but it is you know, she said it's just don't make it.

A

Allison 04:22

Well, at least it's broccoli. You know? It's not like she's eating a tub of pudding or something.

K

Karen Holmes 04:27

It's just sugar coated broccoli, but hey, what the heck you know,

A

Allison 04:31

with bacon, or do you put bacon in yours?

K

Karen Holmes 04:32

Oh yes. Well, I don't in hers because she's vegan, but I do and everybody else's.

A

Allison 04:38

How do you do a vegan friendly Christmas dinner?

K

Karen Holmes 04:43

She is a really good cook and she's been vegan for 13 years now. She she now will make her own stuff. She you know, whatever we're having, she'll go out and she'll do the sides and stuff like that. And most of the sides I make I'll make her version and everybody else's version.

A

Allison 05:04

That's a lot of work.

K

Karen Holmes 05:05

It's really not, cuz you make the base and then put in you just don't want to egg or whatever. Right? Yeah, right. So it's really not that difficult. And it's funny because some of the stuff I'll just go well, that's really vegan anyway. So I'm just going to leave out the.. I'll use vegetable broth instead of chicken broth and nobody knows the difference. So we're good there. I just don't I don't advertise that right. If somebody says this tastes a little different mom this time? Oh, really? Yeah, well, vegetable broth instead chicken broth, okay. You know, if it don't make a big deal about it. It's not that it hasn't been a challenge at times for meals with her, but it's pretty simple.

A

Allison 05:48

Is there a particular favorite recipe that must be made either on Christmas day or during the Christmas season? Like a particular cookie recipe? Or?

K

Karen Holmes 05:56

Well, definitely the crack has to be made. The broccoli, broccoli salad has to be made. And the dressing. For whatever reason my kids like my dressing, is

A

Allison 06:06

it a cornbread dressing? No,

K

Karen Holmes 06:07

it's just a bread dressing. And that definitely has to have a big dish the dressing, which is funny because my family is picky. And usually dressing is not what picky people want to eat because

of the texture, I think well and it's got all this stuff in it, they can identify you know, and so and it's all touching you know, you know, so but that is such a must is a dress Okay, for my husband is the ham. We can't go without the ham.

A

Allison 06:36

Okay, well, will you share your broccoli crack? We won't call it that. Will you share your broccoli salad recipe with us?

K

Karen Holmes 06:43

Yes.

A

Allison 06:43

Okay. We'll make sure we post that on the website. So what about traditions with your family? Do you guys do caroling or gingerbread? Or?

K

Karen Holmes 06:51

We used to. When we homeschooled we used to go down to the what is the San Antonio River and do the riverboat cruise? Oh, yeah. And we would carol on the river boats. That was a lot of fun. That's so fun.

A

Allison 07:09

We have another family that I've interviewed that does that. So just for those of you that don't live in San Antonio, we have a beautiful Riverwalk, we're world famous for it. Yeah. And you can actually rent the flat bottom boat for like your whole party if you want to. And get on the boat and they'll just take you down the river and you can do you know sing carols if you would like to serenade everybody on the side of the river. So that's really fun.

K

Karen Holmes 07:32

And if you get a good guide, they tell you the history of the all the buildings along the Riverwalk, and everything's really, really neat. And it's all lit up with lights. And it's inexpensive, it's Yeah, yeah, it's really not it's not an expensive thing to do. Yeah. So that was something that we used to do. And that really, you know, traveling to family has been that's your tradition. That's the tradition. It really is.

A

Allison 07:55

So we know that Christmas can be really a crazy season hectic, trying to fit all the things in in a

very short period of time. What are some strategies that you've used to sort of keep the main thing the main thing in the Christmas season and not lose your mind?

K

Karen Holmes 08:10

Well, one of the things that my sister in law shared with me that I incorporated was, how many presents did Jesus get? He got three. So we only get three presents. Okay. So that keeps it from being this, yeah, rush to buy and overspend and do all these crazy things. And my brother sends out the Christmas wish list. And that's so that he can buy everybody's presents, and know what everybody wants and get, get what they want. So he mails that out. And then we all end up with a copy of it. So that, you know, we can look at that and go. So that takes a lot of the chaos out as well. And I'm not, I'm just not one of these persons that's really into spending a lot of money and just going nuts. And, you know, I've been at relative's houses where there's, you can't even see the Christmas tree. There's so many, you know, presents stacked and, and we you know, one year I was just, I was kind of embarrassed, you know, because we had opened our three presents and everything was, they were still opening. And my girls are looking at me like are there any more for us? So I've never been one of these, you know, let's overdue this holiday. It's about Jesus. It's not about us. And so, we've kind of stuck to that three present thing even now.

A

Allison 09:52

Yeah, that's a good rule. Yeah, yeah. I know a lot of people that do that. Some people say want something you want something you need And something else there's a third category, they even put it into three categories.

K

Karen Holmes 10:05

Well, my daughter's would like Christmas is not about what I need. Don't get me socks. Do not buy me a printer. You know, I, I can go get a printer anytime I want, you know. Yeah, so we don't we don't go that

A

Allison 10:18

far something that they wouldn't splurge for themselves, right? Whatever. Yeah, supposed to be special. Yeah.

K

Karen Holmes 10:23

So you know, you think about that frankincense and myrrh and the, you know, everything that was brought and gold, but those were expensive, special gifts. And so, though I don't want it to be super materialistic, you know, we usually go for the special things. Yeah, thanks. Yeah. Thoughtful things.

A

Allison 10:42

Great. Anything else you want to share about Christmas?

K

Karen Holmes 10:48

I just think is really important that we focus in on what Christmas is about, you know, that really wasn't even when Jesus was born, right. He was born in the spring. And so I think it's really important that we don't, you know, we don't take our eyes off of him. And that it's so easy to get caught up in even even family squabbles and ordeals that go on during that time. And, you know, it's so easy to get caught up in that and forget why we're celebrating. And I think it's important, you know, my roommates in college. Before we would leave for home, we would always read the story of Jesus. And it just that just meant a lot. Yeah, to be able to do that. And I've done that with my family off and on. I just think that's really important. That's a good tradition. Yeah.

A

Allison 11:45

Do you read it like on Christmas morning together? Christmas Eve. Christmas Eve, Christmas? Yeah. Sweet. All right. Well, thanks for sharing your Christmas memories and tips with us. Sure. Merry Christmas.

K

Karen Holmes 11:57

Merry Christmas.

A

Allison 12:04

My friend, Judy Watters and I are going to discuss Christmas. So Judy, what does a typical Christmas day look like at your house?

J

Judy Watters 12:14

Well, now that the kids are all grown and have their own homes, it's quite a bit different than when they were little. Now we go to our son's house, we usually have Thanksgiving here, our home, but we go to our son's house in San Antonio for Christmas, and especially now that we have grandbaby Sydney Joy, you know, that is fun. But we invite her Sydney's other grandparents, so they're with us. And we do. I don't know, I think we've done steak. We've done different things, you know, for Christmas, is really a lot different than when my children were little. Because it was ham it was at my sister's house it was or in Kansas at my husband's family's house. So Christmas tradition though. It looks different now, because we are spending we're not spending a lot of money anymore because our kids all make more than we do. So a lot of times, we'll just if we're not at Aaron's house, we will go to an Airbnb with all of them and spend time and that's our, like, what that was the airline tickets was their gift to them. Oh, yeah. Okay, so we did that.

A

Allison 13:38

I like that. What about when they were little? What was it? Was it like, chaos? Christmas morning chaos or are you guys more orderly?

J

Judy Watters 13:45

No, it was chaos. It was chaos. And we were that's one thing. My husband and I were wrapping gifts the night before, early in the morning. For them to tear apart. Next thing that, you know, just a few hours later, right? Yes, it was total chaos, chaos. And we would open gifts at home first, and then we'd go to my sister's house and open gifts there where we'd exchange names at Thanksgiving and then open gifts there. So that was fun. And my mom always went to the Dollar Store, Dollar Tree and bought gifts for the kids. Because she had a lot of grandkids and great grandkids. But they always got a gift from her they were happy with. I'm sure they are yes, yes.

A

Allison 14:32

That's the thought that counts. Yes. What about food? You said it's kind of different depending on where you are. But is there I always like to ask is there a particular family recipe whether you make it or not? That must be present?

J

Judy Watters 14:47

Oh, yes, definitely. Yeah. Well, I do make all the pies. Oh, that's one thing I did pick up from my mom. I make really good pie crust and pies. Yeah, I really do. But that's one thing I really they do well. But the other thing is Christmas salad. And I guess it's called 24 salad. If you look it up in a recipe book and 24 salad 24 hour salad. There's a little pudding with vinegar and sugar and egg yolks and like that, and then it sits overnight for 24 hours and you add in all kinds of fruit and marshmallows, and it's really yummy.

A

Allison 15:26

I have never heard of it.

J

Judy Watters 15:27

Oh, it's very good. But my aunt Eileen always made it for every Christmas get together. And so it is on our table, too.

A

Allison 15:35

Oh my goodness. Okay, so could you share this recipe with us? Okay, because we're going to

Oh my goodness. Okay, so could you share this recipe with us? Okay, because we're going to try to share all these holiday recipes that everybody's been telling us about and I I wouldn't even know where to begin to look for that. Yeah, I've never heard of that before. Oh, fantastic. Yummy. Okay, now what's your what is what do you think is the best pie that you make? Since you're the pie lady?

J Judy Watters 15:55

Huh? I love apple pie. I guess Apple probably an apple.

A Allison 16:00

Well, you did grow up on an apple orchard.

J Judy Watters 16:01

I did. Yes. We had lots of apple this and apple that--rhubarb strat, strawberry rhubarb.

A Allison 16:07

Strawberry Rhubarb pie.

J Judy Watters 16:08

I can do that. But it's usually for every holiday for Thanksgiving and Christmas. It's always the same as apple pie. Pecan pie. An apple, pumpkin, pecan, and chocolate, and lemon merangue . Oh, you know, and we have a small family now. I mean, we're not really. But we have five pies. Because I have to it's something for everyone There's always room for more pies.

A Allison 16:37

I totally agree with that. Did you guys have any special holiday traditions in your family?

J Judy Watters 16:44

Not you know, I can't think of any other than Well, I guess a Christmas program that the kids were always in at church. They love doing that. So we always took part in that. But when I was little on the farm, we would have a day, the week before we would go up on the hill and pick out a Christmas tree and chop down our own Christmas tree and decorate that. And us kids always got to decorate it. And our trees... Mom always wanted us to leave the nicest trees on the farm. So we got trees that had a branch here a branch there... Oh, Charlie Brown tree, basically, we thought they were the most beautiful trees, then we throw that tensile at it and throw that all over. So it just made it so beautiful.

A

Allison 17:35

I'm laughing because I've heard this story before in your book, *The Road Home*, where you tell it so well. And it's hilarious about how you know it's got to have only one top. But then by the time you trimmed it to get it in the house now it's got four tops and and the tensile with your sister wanting it to be just right. Yeah, that was a great story.

J

Judy Watters 17:55

Perfect. She wanted the perfect tree and she got it and her older years, not when we were little.

A

Allison 18:01

Well, now we know that the holiday can be just crazy and hectic. And I just wanted to ask you, how do you sort of keep the main thing the main thing during the holiday season? How do you keep it between the rails and keep your focus where it needs to be?

J

Judy Watters 18:18

Oh, my goodness, it is hard. It is hard. It's in a lot of scheduling. And now that I have my iPhone and my husband has taught me to put use my calendar. And so I use that well. I make sure that we have all the church activities written down in there all the different times with friends and family. I think it's just and then of course, I have to make sure I know when I have to start making those Christmas cookies and when you know the timing of it. All right. All of that goes on the calendar. Yeah, bake Christmas cookies today. Do Christmas salad today. So it all goes on the calendar.

A

Allison 18:59

That's good. That's do you make your pies ahead of time and freeze them? No, you make them fresh.

J

Judy Watters 19:05

Well, the day before. That's a lot of pie baking,

A

Allison 19:09

That is a lot of pie baking, but you're just mainly doing the pies. You're not having to make ham and all that other stuff.

J Judy Watters 19:14
No, I leave that up to the others. Well, the Christmas salad. Yeah.

A Allison 19:19
Well, that. And that brings us back full circle to our earlier conversation about knowing your strengths. And knowing your limits. That's right. So that's good.

J Judy Watters 19:27
Then basically I think when we've had the ham or turkey it's been Bill Miller's or Rudy's.

A Allison 19:35
I am all about that. Outsource whatever you can.

J Judy Watters 19:39
and took me a long time to be okay with that. Yeah, but it was my son's home. And he got to call the shots. And I didn't want to say well, I didn't want to be a naysayer and say Are you kidding me? No homemade turkey or what? You know, so I went with it and it really has worked out quite well.

A Allison 19:59
Yeah. really nice, especially if you only have one oven. Yes. Logistically so much easier. Definitely. So definitely. Well, is there anything else you'd like to share about Christmas?

J Judy Watters 20:10
I think that's about it. It's a fun time of the year. One of those times I really look forward to Yeah, we all do. Well, great.

A Allison 20:19
Thank you for sharing and Merry Christmas.

J Judy Watters 20:21
Merry Christmas.

A

Allison 20:23

Love came down at Christmas. Love all lovely. Love divine. Love was born at Christmas. Star and angels gave the sign. Worship we the Godhead, love incarnate love divine. Worship we our Jesus. But wherewith for Sacred sign. Love shall be our token. Love shall be yours. And love be mine. Love to God and to all men. Love for plea and gift and sign. Christina Rosati. 1885 All right, I'm back with my friend Gayle Wills, and we're going to talk about Christmas. So Gayle, what does a typical Christmas day look like at your house?

G

Gayle 21:14

Um, well, it's it's a little different now that my children are grown. But Christmas Eve, my daughter's an amazing cook. So she cooks every year Beef Wellington, and we bring the sides and oh, wow, we were our jammies. And you know, we all go over there and we open up one gift. And then they come over for Christmas day, my son and daughter in law and two children, they usually spend a night for Christmas Eve. And then we just have a morning of just we you know, everyone opens their gifts of course, but we have more of a Cajun theme. On Christmas Day, we make gumbo or shrimp jamb or something like this. I think this year it's going to actually be shrimp and grits because my husband found an amazing recipe. And we go outside, you know, or we'll play card games or whatever. And of course, you know, it's it's, you know, we celebrate our Savior.

A

Allison 22:09

Yeah, yeah. So what about desserts? Is there a particular special dessert that you make at Christmas time?

G

Gayle 22:15

Well, yes, it's white chocolate bread pudding.

A

Allison 22:18

We just talked about that on her episode that we just recorded. So make sure you go back and listen and check the blog posts for that recipe. Do you have, do you guys do like any special cookie baking? Do you do gingerbread or anything like that?

G

Gayle 22:31

We do we bake cookies and don't do gingerbreads? My my husband occasionally does gingerbread houses with the with my granddaughter and you send that once or twice. I think that yeah, we do cookies. We bake cookies. Right cookies.

A

Allison 22:45

Well, when your kids were at home? What was your Christmas like then was it were you guys real methodical about you know, doing everything just so or was it like chaos Christmas morning chaos?

G

Gayle 22:55

Well, we were always traveling. Okay. So for when they were young, we always went back down home to my parents house. And again, experience their hospitality. Yeah, ya know, and it was real similar to us. And what we do today, what they did back then, but also we would visit with other relatives we haven't seen in a long time. And that was always really special. That one thing going back that I almost forgot about, I think that's very important is that I always at my home have someone over that does not have family, you know. And every year we usually have someone over when the kids were younger. We always, you know, one year we bought a little girl from an orphanage, we have had military at our house. And I learned that from my mom, you know, when I was young. And that's the way pretty much she raised me. And so that was a wonderful memory for me. So we did the same thing and still occasionally do thatn on Christmas Day. I do have a friend that lost her husband two years ago and she's she comes over you know, every Christmas.

A

Allison 24:00

I love that. That's that's such a great tradition to just reach out to those people because there's always there's always going to be somebody in your community.

G

Gayle 24:06

Yeah, and you know, also another thing we did when the children were little so we took goods you know, to families and toys or food or whatever our Christmas decorations so

A

Allison 24:18

did you find those families did you look through your church or

G

Gayle 24:21

through my church or word of mouth.

A

Allison 24:25

Yeah, that's a good that's a good thing to to implement as well. What about any other special holiday traditions that you would do on a regular basis? Did you go Christmas caroling or looking at lights? Or?

looking at lights? Or?

G

Gayle 24:38

Yes, yes, we were do that. Now. We drive to Marble Falls. Oh, that's a great one. Yeah, and Johnson City. Yeah, we do that every Christmas with the grandkids now so we do love that. And

A

Allison 24:51

yeah, that's really fun every year. Yeah. Cool. Do you put Christmas lights on your own house?

G

Gayle 24:57

Yeah. For Christmas. Yeah. So and I and I just still use, I still have a real tree. I love to smell the real Christmas tree. So I always go out and get a Christmas tree. So that was one thing we used to always do. When the kids were younger that was always a lot of fun.

A

Allison 25:13

What are your tips for keeping your Christmas tree alive? Because it's pretty dry here.

G

Gayle 25:18

Yeah, right. Well, you know, they always say, you know, you don't cut the trunk off until you know, when you get home. 30 minutes, no longer than 30 minutes. That's a big key right there. Because if you they cut the trunk off and you bring it home, you let it sit for a couple of days. Now they give you packets to keep your Christmas tree alive. And we use that.

A

Allison 25:40

So 30 minutes, I hadn't heard that rule. So cut your tree on the bottom. Cut it 30 minutes before you're going to put it up and put it in water.

G

Gayle 25:49

Yes. And it will absorb some water. And the next day water it again, because it really soaks up.

A

Allison 25:56

It's kind of like how when you have fresh flowers when you bring them home from the grocery store, right? I always clip them, you know, right before I stick them in the water. Yeah. Good to know. Good tip. Well, holidays can be crazy. The holiday season can be totally hectic. How do

you keep the main thing? The main thing? How do you keep focused on what's most important in the holiday season?

G

Gayle 26:19

Oh, gosh, you have to? It always seems every year it happens to gets busier and busier and busier. And you just have to stop and focus on what the Christmas season is about. And you know, and honestly, I just really go into a lot of prayer during that time, not just for myself, but for others, because that is centered around Christ. And it is so easy to get caught up with other things during that season and time.

A

Allison 26:50

Absolutely. Do you have any particular devotional materials that you use to help you or what what? Where do you typically where are you reading in the Bible during the Christmas season? Or do you have like an Advent guide or something?

G

Gayle 27:01

I've had Advent guides for sure. In the past. And in I love the Psalms. But of course, I've go to New Testament, Matthew about that time in that season. And there's always something new I learn, you know, when I read know about the Lord and this resurrection, there's when I go to Scripture and read different books, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, I, I there's always something every year I learned it never. Yeah, I'm always learning something new. And there are so I like to spend my time focusing on that. And not being so distracted so much. Yeah, no,

A

Allison 27:37

definitely. Well, anything else you'd like to share about Christmas?

G

Gayle 27:41

And it's just a beautiful season. You know, it's, it's, I would not focus. At this time in my life, I'm trying to get rid of material things, you know, and I think when you're a parent, you want to get, you know, your child, most favorite, you know, the best doll. And there's definitely nothing wrong with that. I've done that too. But I just think it's just, you know, focusing on what the whole meaning of Christmas and the season is, and especially after these last couple years, you know, it puts you more in perspective of family and how important family is. And you know, just making sure you try to make peace with everyone in your family, because your family could be challenging too.

A

Allison 28:25

Yeah, that's for sure. Blessed are the peacemakers, well, thanks. Merry Christmas,

G

Gayle 28:30

Merry Christmas.

A

Allison 28:38

Well, Christmas is quickly approaching, and soon it will be time to pack away the tinsel and mistletoe until next year, may I encourage you, before you move on to resolutions and organization projects for 2020 to take a little time for holiday 2021 reflection and record keeping. So why would you want to do this? Well, it's a great exercise in journal keeping, maybe even a treasure for your great grandchildren to discover one day. And in the more immediate future, keeping a record of Christmas can be a valuable aid to help you plan in the years to come. So how do you do it? Well, it can be as simple or as fancy as you would like. You can purchase lovely Christmas memory books. You can purchase little kits on Etsy that you could print out yourself at home, you could use a blank scrapbook, you can get all techie and geek out with spreadsheets and that sort of thing. Or just go old school with a notebook and a pencil. I've done it a few different ways I've carried around a small little festive notebook that I think I've got at the dollar spot at Target. And that would include all my To Do lists and my gift list and my menus and I would just keep that with me everywhere I went during the season. Lately I've been keeping my Christmas records on my phone using my notes app. While this is a more practical way to keep records because I can access at any time from any anywhere, it's not especially pretty. And I doubt that future generations are going to be super excited to read random notes on my iPhone. So I will likely do some kind of hybrid. And I usually do I keep at least a little scrapbook of all the old Christmas cards that we received, and I tuck in all the menus and whatnot. But we'll get to that in a second. So what what should you keep track of? What should you be reflecting on and keeping records of, I have a few areas to suggest to you. Number one, food and drink. Number two gifts and cards. Number three, games and activities. Number four, Advent and worship. Okay, first food and drink. It's a great idea to record your menus, what did you eat for your main Christmas meal, or meals. If you're like me, and you have multiple people coming multiple times throughout the week of Christmas, I want to keep a record of what we had for Christmas Eve, or what we ate for Christmas brunch, and then what we ate for Christmas dinner. So record your menus, include copies of recipes with notes. So did you have a success and a particular recipe that you want to make sure that you're able to repeat next year, make some notes about why it was successful, make notes about why it was not successful. If you want to make changes to the recipe, if you did make changes and you substituted certain things, certain ingredients, I have to do this a lot because I have two kids with celiac disease. So I have to often take regular recipes and convert them into gluten free. And that requires tweaking the recipe and adding a little extra fat and a little extra liquid. So I want to make sure if it's especially if it was good, I write down what I did. So that the next time I go to make that recipe in Christmases to come, I'll remember how I did it successfully. And then if you had a great meal or some fantastic food somewhere else during the season, write that down, maybe it was a restaurant you went to that had a special Christmas menu, maybe you went to a friend's home and they had a party with the most fabulous appetizers you've ever had. If you have a notion to want to get a copy of that recipe from that friend, maybe jot that down or you want to try to recreate that meal that you had at the restaurant. Jot that down. Okay, the second thing is gifts and cards. Keep a record of the gifts that you've given, and how about how much you spent on the gifts, it's super helpful to go back if you can't remember what you gave Aunt Susie last year for Christmas, and you don't want to repeat the

gift and give her something very similar or the same thing. Go back and check and see what you gave. And even for your kids. I mean, you think you're going to remember but I promise you're not going to remember every single thing. Keep a record of that. And then to give yourself an idea of what you need to budget for next year, it's helpful to have the amounts approximate amounts of what you spent on gifts as well. Just a side note about gifts, I keep a running list in my notes app of gift ideas all throughout the year. If something pops up in my mind, for a particular person, I just jot that down in my notes app, I have a special hidden note for I can only access it through a special code so that nobody can be snooping on my phone and see what they might be getting for Christmas next year. But keep that in your phone. So you always have it handy. And one other tip about that, if you purchase the gift early in the year, write down where you put it, cuz you think you're gonna remember where you hid that gift. You might even forget, especially if you buy it like in April, you might forget by the time Christmas rolls around next year that you actually bought something for that person already. So write it down. Now the second thing about gifts, keep a list of what you received this year. list what the item was, who gave it to you, and whether or not you sent them a thank you note. So let's talk just a little bit about Christmas cards. One thing that I always do when I get Christmas cards in the mail, I immediately check the return address and I match it up to the most recent contact information I have on that person. And I make sure that they match, because they might have moved in the previous year. And I didn't know and I didn't have their new address. So if I don't have time to immediately change it in my contacts list. I actually have an old school address book that I write in it with pencil. And I keep it on my desk with all my letter writing and envelopes and stamps and stuff. So if I don't have time to jot it down, I'll just take that envelope. And I'll tuck it away in that little book. If you don't keep a written book, and you don't have time to jot it down, right, or enter it into your contacts on your phone. Just take a picture of it. And then you know it'll be in your photo roll for later when you have time to change their contact information. Okay, so a couple of words about what to do with those Christmas cards because most people we display them during the Christmas season. And then you have all these cards and you're not sure what to do with them. So I'm talking right now about the ones that do not have family photos on them. They're just like a generic Christmas card with a lovely Christmas scene on the front. You can make gift tags out of those. You could make a recipe book by attaching you could cut the card in half and just keep the top part with the pretty picture. And then on the back of that you could attach a handwritten recipe card and then laminate the whole thing. Put a bunch of those together. They're on a D ring. And then you have a lovely little flip book, a little holiday recipe book, you can make thank you notes out of them. Same kind of concept, you can cut it in half and use the top part that's got the pretty picture on one side. And on the other side, attach a blank piece of paper with tape or double stick tape or something like that. And then write out your thank you notes on those, here's a great idea for something to do with those Christmas cards that you get that have all the family photos on them, because you're not going to recycle those into something nice. I have seen people recycle those into ornaments. So that's something you could do. But this is one of my favorite ideas that I read about years ago. Take the family photo cards, and make them into a little prayer book. And use it to remind you to pray for those people throughout the year, you can take the cards in their full form, or you can just cut out a picture of that family from the card and, and you can throw the rest away. And then just put them all together again, put them on a little D ring, just poke a hole in the top corner of each one and time together with ribbon or a little D ring. And then keep that with you in your basket, devotional basket that you use for your quiet time in the morning. And pull that out every so often. And just flip through, look at those faces and pray for those people. Okay, the third area that you might want to keep some records would be games and activities. What are the places you went to? Did you go see the Nutcracker somewhere? Did you go look at lights? That was particularly awesome. Maybe there was you stumbled upon a neighborhood that you didn't know about that just goes all out on

Christmas lights? Jot that down as just as a way of keeping a record of it. But also as a reference for later on. If you're thinking maybe two years down the road. Oh, we have time to go look at Christmas lights this year. Do you guys remember what was that neighborhood that we found? You probably won't remember. So write it down games you play like Minute to Win It kind of games and that sort of thing. Just jot down the game or print it out and stick it in your little folder or if you're doing this on your notes app, you can just link to different instructions for different games on websites, special events, like a kid's concert or anything like that service opportunities. What where when, who's the contact person for going to serve at the soup kitchen or maybe you did like adoptive family kind of thing. And you purchased presents for a family in need. Write all that down so that you can if you want to do it again in years to come you know who to contact or which organization was good to work with and which one was not so good to work with. And then the fourth and final area would be Advent and worship. You want to keep records of things like what resources did you use? Did you find a particular devotional or reading program to use during the Advent season to prepare yourself for worship? Where did you worship during the season? maybe want to save the program from your Christmas Eve service? And then any personal reflections and observations? What kind of spiritual growth did you experience throughout this season, and maybe even write down a few goals for having a more worshipful peaceful season next year. So whether you decide to make it techy, go old school with just a lined notebook, or go all out and make a beautiful scrapbook style journal. Just take a little time to make a record of this Christmas. Your future self will thank you. Alright, I'm here with my friend Teri Hall. And Teri, what does a typical Christmas day look like at your house?

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Teri 38:31

Okay, well, a few years ago, I mean, it's been longer than a few it was when we lived in Fort Worth. So probably in the 90s. We came across a song I think I gotten a little Christmas CD. And it was a Rich Mullins song called "Gotta Get Up". And I love the song because it talks about you got to get up it's Christmas morning. And we would our kids were older then because you know how it was when they're really young. They're getting up before dawn, and we're telling him to go back to bed. But they were at that age where they weren't up. And we would play that and because we would tell them don't get up before us. But when they would hear that song. They knew it was time they could come into the living room. And to this day, they're not in our home anymore. And so sometimes our holidays aren't spent with us. But we'll teasingly call him and be playing this on you got to get you got to get up it's Christmas morning. And anyway, so that's kind of a tradition for us. We'd love that song. And I would say at Christmas time in the past. There were things. One thing that kind of lived is we started a Christmas card tree and that we would set up in the four year the entry of our home. And it was an artificial tree. And instead of ornaments, we'd put our cards on it. And they became the ornament. And it was just a simple little tree, a tabletop tree that we use. And surprisingly, as time goes, by, over the years, maybe you've seen this too, you don't get as many Christmas cards as he used to. I know. So that little tree is not as full as it used to be. But it is a tradition that is that, especially with my cancer when I did have cancer, and I, my surgery was done right before Thanksgiving. So I was still healing, you know, for that year at Christmas time. That was the one thing that did get put up, even though I wasn't have the energy. That is one thing that always is there. And then I would say another tradition that we've always had from day one of our marriage, my husband always insisted that we have a live tree, fresh tree. And I was raised with artificial tree. And he is well he had one of those tinsel trees, if you remember Allison, where they had the light under it and change colors and rotate. And I guess he had an aversion

to that. And like, of course that was totally opposite from anything that's real. And from the day we got married, he said no, we're having a real tree. And so we have always had a real tree for our Christmases. So

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Allison 41:30

that's really, you go out and cut it down yourself or you just go to the tree lot and get it and

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Teri 41:36

we go to the tree lot. And sometimes with you know with our, in our thing, me and this is so expensive. And so in one year, we bought something it was kind of less than what we would have wanted. And he I had gone to see, I think my sister or something had gone out of town. And I think he was embarrassed about the tree we had. So I came back maybe a couple of days before Christmas, I had come back. And lo and behold because a couple of days before Christmas, you can get them dirt cheap. He had gotten this beautiful tree much nicer than what we had spent and and had totally undecorated the one we had and surprised me with his with this beautiful tree. Wow, I think we we had John than our oldest but I'm trying to think of Heidi was maybe Heidi as well. But anyway, he wanted to make sure it was special. And that's something that's important to him so very sweet. It wasn't gonna be a Charlie Brown

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Allison 42:46

tree. No, no, Charlie Brown tree. Well, what do you guys eat on Christmas? What's your typical Christmas menu?

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Teri 42:53

It often use was turkey and dressing. Over the years we've kind of varied from turkey and dressing on Christmas Day. We've done the the beef thing. Oh, you know what I'm talking about? I can't think about anyway, he were done different beef dishes and maybe not Turkey. And so like prime rib kind of yeah, yes. Yes. And so. But they're the sides tend to, to always be the same. And one of those that's been a favorite is a Korean casserole that we really like. And one of our daughters lived for a couple of years in New York and took that to an event that their employer was having for Thanksgiving. They invited some of their employees and included she and her husband. And being in the north. They never had anything like corn casserole. So and they fell in love with it. So that was kind of cool that she took one of our family dishes and introduced it to the finer folks in New York. But they fell in love with it. So we got a hoot out of that.

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Allison 44:06

Is it like a corn is like a cream? Do you use cream corn in it and butter and all of that

T Teri 44:10
in the cornbread dressing? eggs and cheese on top? Yeah, yeah, it's yummy. It's comfort food for sure.

A Allison 44:17
Can we can we link that recipe in the show notes? Would you share that? Yes,

T Teri 44:20
it's super easy. Okay. Yeah, it's super easy recipe. Well

A Allison 44:24
make sure we have that in the notes for everybody. Well, do you have Okay, well, are there any other recipes I always like to ask about desserts is there like a special Christmas dessert that you have to have or maybe a special cookie recipe you make in the Christmas season or anything like that?

T Teri 44:40
So you know back in the day, we always did a lot of candy because pretty much that's the only time of year you make candy homemade candy. I did do a lot of candy. Now with my cancer. I tried to stay away from sugar just because some of my oral issues with my cancer being in involving the head and neck area, right? I really have to. So we don't do as much as we did. But one cookie recipe that we really like is we call them snowball cookies. It's an old recipe from a lady in my church growing up in what our church because my husband and I are from the same hometown. And they were called Better fingers the recipe but and you made them like little fingers. But I started making them like little little balls, and you roll them in powdered sugar.

A Allison 45:33
Is it like a Mexican wedding cookie cookie? Kind of probably because it's got a lot of pecan.

T Teri 45:37
And yeah, melts in your mouth? Yes. So we call them snowball. Yeah, well,

A Allison 45:45
that's what they look like. Yeah.

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Teri 45:46

And we start I started making a make Christmas time in kind of just made it it made it a snowball cookie, we didn't make the better made the finger shape anymore. So

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Allison 45:57

what about any particular holiday traditions that your family would do during the season? Did you guys go caroling? Or did you make gingerbread or anything special you would always do?

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Teri 46:10

We always did try to drive around and look at the Christmas lights. And we we had times where we did go caroling, but it wasn't something we did regularly. So I would say probably that was one of the things we did that we would always take time to look at Christmas lights and trying to think if there was anything else that I can't, that thing that just kind of lived all the time. So one year at Christmas, our youngest daughter was sick. And of course, you tried to go to the neighborhoods that had the most lights. Yeah. And we're in our little Honda Accord all five of us. And she's like, I know I'm feeling good. And we roll over and we're having to let her just throw up in that person. So bless her heart. But yeah, so sometimes that's a that's a funny Christmas memory. I have a vessel looking at the lights, because we actually had to stop so that she could throw up and then unfortunately, within a couple of days, everybody was

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Allison 47:18

sick. Yeah. That's the worst. Yeah, that's the worst. Well, holidays can be crazy and hectic. And they can get away from us. So what are some of the things that you would do to keep the focus where it needed to be, and keep yourself sort of at at peace during the season of peace.

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Teri 47:43

I used to do a lot more decorating. I've had seasons, you know where I did a lot, you just have to remember that whatever you take up has to come down. And so I don't do as much as I used to. And one thing I tried to start early try to buy things on sale. With me, you know, and that was mainly with me not working outside the home. So I did have to be intentional that way. I I love wrapping presents is kind of one of my favorite things. And I love putting the fancy bows on. So I'm not a gift bag person. I'd rather wrap it and have the pretty bow. And then I make my own bow. So I have fun doing that it. I love it. It brings me joy. So that isn't something I'm intentional about and I like to start early. I'm not one to do it the night before. And so too, because people tend to have children that want to shake the gifts and or you know, yeah, so I wouldn't label the gifts. And I had to so I would incorporate one kind of wrapping paper, okay, for each child. That was just they didn't know. So that way the presence could go under the tree. But they didn't know whose was here. They didn't know who's wrapping paper with you know, they finally figured it out. Oh, I have all the same ones that were wrapped that way.

Because they would say how do you know mom? And I'm like, yeah, no, because I didn't I wanted to take time in wrapping them and making them look pretty. And I knew I wouldn't be able to do all that the night before. Oh, no. So that I learned that system.

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Allison 49:25

That's a good system. Great. Well, anything else you'd like to share about Christmas?

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Teri 49:32

I think that's about it for me. Just I enjoy seeing today's generation, not putting so much focus on things and being more simplistic in so I embrace that with them. I've learned so much from our younger generation that they even they teach me a lot to a lot.

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Allison 49:53

That's good. It's good to be teachable. Well, thank you very much for sharing and Merry Christmas.

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Teri 49:58

Well thank you

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Allison 50:01

Well that is a wrap on holiday homemaking 2021 If you've missed our previous holiday episodes, be sure to go back and give those a listen. Thank you so much for listening and sharing in the Christmas spirit with us. Over these past four weeks, we pray that your hearts and homes will be full of hope, peace, joy and love as you celebrate the greatest gift of all, Jesus, our Savior. We will be back in January with all new episodes featuring homemaker portrait interviews as well as some new content we are really excited about. Until then, keep practicing your art of making a home for the holidays.