

AoH Holiday Homemaking 2021_Ep2_Laurie_Joi_Kim_Susan_Kelly -...

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christmas, gingerbread house, stockings, fun, year, big, gingerbread, recipe, share, house, toffee, tip, friends, kids, lived, gifts, people, holiday, buy, tradition

SPEAKERS

Joi Welch, Kelly Eakins, Laurie Mott, Susan Macias, Allison, Kim Stedman

A Allison 00:05

Merry Christmas, homemakers. Welcome to the Art of home podcast holiday homemaking 2021, where we are exploring how homemakers cultivate a place to belong during the season of peace on earth, goodwill toward men. 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 now. So peace on earth goodwill toward men. How is that going for you? If you're following along with Advent we are in week two and the theme is peace. Yes, during this most busy time of year, peace can seem unattainable. And it is apart from the one who brings lasting peace. So let me encourage you to look to Him as your source of peace and comfort. No matter what circumstances you're facing this Christmas season. We have some very simple Advent devotions on our Instagram page each day. This week, there is a truth about the peace of God along with a related scripture reading and a worship song or hymn, and you can access full playlist for each week of Advent on our page as well. We will link all of that in the show notes below. We have a great show for you today. You'll hear about games and puzzles from Kelly Eakins. A great tip on boys socks and underwear from Mom of seven Susan Macias green pickle ornaments from Kim Steadman and Hygge tips from Joi Welch, as well as the need for muscle when making toffee from Laurie Mott. I do want to let you know that sadly, we lost the first part of Laurie's interview and so her segment sort of begins in the middle of our conversation. Sorry about that. We do our best to prevent it but technical difficulties will happen occasionally. So whether you're wrapping gifts or wrapping the tree with light, we know you will enjoy these holiday stories of home. So you do all your festivities on Christmas Day?

L Laurie Mott 01:58

We do. Okay, we do.

A Allison 02:00

Might as tell me about the toffee

AIRright, so tell me about the toffee.

L

Laurie Mott 02:02

Oh, my when I was a nurse, I worked for an OBGYN in his practice. And at Christmas time every single pregnant lady brings you a plate of cookies. And this one lady brought this huge plate of many things but there was this toffee on the plate and it was to die for. It's like an English toffee and so I asked her for the recipe she gave it to me, you stir forever, your arm gets so tired. And the first couple times I made it the chocolate didn't stick to the toffee or I didn't cook it long enough. But I knew what it was supposed to taste like and I kept trying. And I practically had become famous for my toffee. There are people that have been in my life and they'll come back and visit and they're like, You don't happen to have any toffee. Oh my gosh. So at Christmas I make toffee I've I rarely give out the recipe because my dad is still alive and it's always his Christmas gift. My best friend is here it's her Christmas gift. Yeah. And I can't if they get the recipe they'll make their own Christmas gift. Okay, they love it so much. Yeah, that they're thrilled to get it for me but

A

Allison 03:10

You are going to teach someone, one of your..

L

Laurie Mott 03:13

my kids, yeah my kids know. They are they are stirrers. They know how long it takes

A

Allison 03:20

Okay. They are being apprentice and the art of Laurie's toffee.

L

Laurie Mott 03:23

They are. And when Marie got married, I made her a cookbook and we have a German Christmas cookie that my grandma used to make called Pepper nuts. And we've eat them every year and I have that recipe in her handwriting. Okay, I found my mom found one recipe in my grandmother, my other grandmother's handwriting. And so I combined all of those. And then I have the toffee recipe in my handwriting. And you stir the stuff for so long. You almost always need help. So every Christmas, I would take a picture of whoever was stirring. Well then it became a contest with my boys to show their muscles. Oh, so I have muscle pictures of the boys stirring toffee and then one year my dad came to visit. So I'm like, Dad, I need a muscle picture. So in her recipe book, there's a picture of her brothers and her grandpa with the muscle pictures stirring. Great.

A

Allison 04:13

I love that. So that's really great. Thank you for sharing that story. Maybe you might share the

I love that. So that's really great. Thank you for sharing that story. Maybe you might share the German cookie recipe with us?

L Laurie Mott 04:19

Oh yeah, the pepper nuts. Definitely.

A Allison 04:21

Okay, we'll put that one on the website. Okay. All right.

L Laurie Mott 04:24

Do you want it in grandma's handwriting?

A Allison 04:26

Well, we might snap a photo of that. That's kind of cool for aesthetic purposes. That's great. Well, is there anything else you would like to share about Christmas time with your family?

L Laurie Mott 04:36

I love Christmas. I just love it. I don't ever want it to end I'm the one of the people who hates to take down the decorations.

A Allison 04:43

How long do you leave them up?

L Laurie Mott 04:44

It always depends what's coming up. You know? Are you getting company?

A Allison 04:48

Well, it probably takes you a while because you have a lot of decorations.

L Laurie Mott 04:51

It did take me about a while but you know how you talked about organization right? I used to just take the decorations down I'd get a bin I throw them in the bin You know, just to get it

done. Yes, I finally learned a few years ago, if I take the time, labeled the bin, and only put in what goes in, say, this corner of the house in that bin, when I go to take it out, you can just take that bin to that corner of the house and everything. Voila , it's so much easier to be organized. Imagine that. It really is.

A Allison 05:19

That's great advice. put things in bins in the same place that they would go together. Yeah. And don't forget to label your bins.

L Laurie Mott 05:28

Okay, then you don't have to walk around the house with the bin going, where does one go?

A Allison 05:31

I also I have another tip related to that. I figured this out. And I'm like, almost 30 years into this journey now. I take pictures. Yes. You probably already figured that out.

L Laurie Mott 05:42

I just go back and look now at your camera roll. Where did I put that?

A Allison 05:46

Because you think you're gonna remember how you arranged the mantel last year that you loved so much. So you're not gonna remember. So here's your tip. Take a photo of it before you take it down. And then just keep it in your phone roll or even print it off on a piece of paper and stick it in that bin. So it's right there. Absolutely. That's what they do in stores. So they know how to like set things up. So you know, we should do that. All right. Well, thank you very much.

L Laurie Mott 06:09

Thank you.

A Allison 06:16

Alright, I'm back here with my friend Joi. And we're going to talk a little bit about some Christmas things. So can you tell us what would a typical Christmas look like at your house?

J Joi Welch 06:26

When I was young, my grandmother always had the big Christmas at her house. It wasn't necessarily Christmas day, it was Christmas Eve, she had a big party, she would invite I mean, all of our family was invited all the cousins, all the aunts, the uncles, we all brought food. Everybody was expected to be there. And we had presents, you could hardly walk in the room, that tree, by the time you gave everybody a present. And we got to a point where we drew names, because we just got to be so such a big family. But if you weren't at Christmas Eve, you were in trouble. But you know what we all love being together. In fact, when I was really pretty newly married, and when our kids were younger, we would have every family would be in charge of the Christmas program. So my mom's family, you know, which was my sister and I and my brother in our our little families. We would do the program one year and we'd think up plays and you know, one year, my aunt and uncle did a puppet show. And so their family would do it one year my uncle and his family would do it one year because my mom has two siblings, so it would rotate every year who's who was in charge of the Christmas program? Uh huh. So that was always something to look forward to. Especially when you didn't have your turn. You could sit and relax and enjoy Christmas. Yeah, it was a little nerve wracking, a little nerve wracking, but we had a lot of participation. Everybody enjoy doing it. And they all took their turns. And it was always something different. You know, if sometimes, like I said, a play a puppet show somebody time. So they would do like a singing. Sing along and just it was always different.

A

Allison 08:15

That is really fun. What about with your, in your little household in your immediate family?

J

Joi Welch 08:21

In our immediate family when the kids were young, we were always at my grandmother's on Christmas Eve. And even if we had to drive back to Dallas, which we were where we live most. For the lot of the years that my kids were young, and then until we moved to Austin, but we would always drive home after Christmas Eve so we could be there for Christmas morning for our kids to wake up and have a family Christmas ham. Okay there. But anyway, I feel like we were always sitting up late at night. You know, putting the last minute things together. You know how that always happens? Always have you have three or four kids and they're always have toys that need to be put together. So I don't remember too many restfull Christmas Eve nice. But yeah, I

A

Allison 09:06

mean, what about food? What was your traditional Christmas meal?

J

Joi Welch 09:11

Um, we usually did. If if we did end up staying at my grandmother's or at my parents, we usually did the turkey and dressing again. Now when we get together at Thanksgiving, we all we all have a I have a big huge family with cousins and aunts and uncles and we would all divide up the meals. Yeah, so that just made it so much easier. You know, somebody would

bring the traditional green bean casserole you always had to have that for all the kids and everybody had their own specialty you know everybody one person my mom does chicken and dumplings that everybody asked for her to triple that recipe every year because the the pot scraped clean. So that's her thing. Yeah. So everybody kind of has their thing to bring in it sure helps. It helps out by not putting all the pressure on one person.

A

Allison 10:02

Absolutely. Which is a great way to maintain balance during a busy holiday season. Yeah. What about special traditions at Christmas time for your family?

J

Joi Welch 10:13

Okay, all my kids are grown. And I have one daughter that lives on the East Coast and his son and his family live on the west coast. So to get everybody together has been a little bit of a challenge. We had this past Christmas, we had a new baby born, so we didn't get to even go see that baby until a few weeks later. But that was so I feel like we you have to be flexible, and not have expectations on your children. But we had a great Christmas with both my daughters and my, my East Coast daughter's new husband, and my Midland daughter who teaches school there, she brought her serious boyfriend. So we had a great time. But I've always loved the idea of stockings in and in making everybody a stocking. In fact, in our even little small cottage, I had a place for all of our stockings. So I hung up on these two branch limbs actually, like pretty cute. But we fill those stockings. But I always feel like when you, we would draw names of who who's who was going to be our person that we were going to concentrate on that year, and put a special note in that stocking of how that person has meant so much to you, even over their lifetime, or even just in the last year, and just how you would like to, you know, maybe spend some extra time with them the next year, or maybe share with them a special characteristic that you feel like God is growing them in, and maybe a special scripture verse, or just whatever anybody has on their hearts to share with that person. So I feel like a lot of times Christmas is material. And we are trying to get away from that. Yeah. When we moved to this little cottage, we decided to do away with a lot of things. And a lot of it had to do with material possessions. Yeah, yeah. And I feel like Christmas sometimes can kind of get out of hand. And I think that's not the purpose.

A

Allison 12:24

Now, for sure. Well, I love your stocking idea. I'm gonna see if I can convince my family to do something like that. And being flexible. I like what you said about don't hold expectations over your children. And we're talking about when you have adult children, and I know some of our listeners are in the same stage we're in. And that's good advice. And I'm just entering that stage. And I now have a daughter in law. So we try to make sure that we don't hold those kinds of expectations. You know, she has a family that wants to see her too at Christmas. So it's a balance. So that's great. Okay, tell us about this thing called a gathering of friends.

J

Joi Welch 12:58

Well my grandmother she was so hospitable. She wanted to always have things at her house

well, my grandmother, she was so hospitable. She wanted to always have things at her house. So when I was newly married, my sister was newly married, and we all lived a little bit closer than we do now. We would all invite each one of our friends, we all went to different churches, we would have just our special friends. I think we each got to invite about 10 people and by the time you invited my mom, in her 10 friends and my aunt and her 10 friends and my grandmother's 10 friends have we had a big, big group. But we called it a gathering of friends, because it was people that we had all touched our life over that last year. And these are all women. And these are all women. Yes, we all had, it was just the women the girls have. And we did it. About a week or so before Christmas before the hecticness of Christmas came. And we just we would have entertainment. I remember one year, I made this table decoration and showed everybody how to put together this easy table decoration that they could put either on their mantel or their fireplace or you know down the center of their kitchen table are just you know how we could use some of the things that we have just gathered up in we would do that would show demonstrations, we'd have a sing along we don't usually have special music we had a lot of our friends could sing really well. And so that was always a part of it. And then somebody would always give a little short devotional and we would just rotate who did that. And it was such a special time because it was my friends got to meet my sister's friends that got to meet my mom's friends. And I felt like it was a time where all those friends looked so forward to coming every year because they said I haven't seen her in a year but they've made a relationship and I felt like that was such a fun time. In that that season of life is

A

Allison 14:56

a really unique idea. I really like that a lot that she did your grandma prepare the food for it

J

Joi Welch 15:01

all of us, my sister, my aunt, and my mom and my grandmother and I, we all made it. and we didn't do...We just did finger foods snacks, and sometimes some people would just bring something just because they wanted to but we didn't do a full meal. But we had a lot of food we would make lots of cakes and pies and candies. Oh, my grandmother was, she made special kinds of candy.

A

Allison 15:27

And oh, did she only make it at Christmas time? Oh, yes,

J

Joi Welch 15:30

she had a divinity that she only made at Christmas time she made that my dad used to bake but a date loaf that sometimes we would get to partake of during that time. So you know, even the man kind of helped out sometimes with the cooking. So

A

Allison 15:45

do you have a favorite recipe that you cook that you only cook at Christmas? You know?

J Joi Welch 15:51

I actually don't I actually just I do every year but this past year because I've just living in a different situation. I always make the Southern Living cake that's on front of the magazine for the December issue. So whichever one they put out ever they put out Yes, but I didn't do it this last year just because of our living situation. But I have always made that cake. It's usually a white cake. Yeah, they put different ideas now I'd never I don't ever I never take a picture of it because it never looks like that Southern Living cake magazine cover. But um, anyway, I enjoy making it always tastes really good. Yeah, but it they always have go a little bit beyond my ability. Yeah, but on the decor of the top.

A Allison 16:40

Right. But that's a great challenge to set for yourself to try to make whatever they put out every year. I like that idea. That's great. All right. Well, was there anything else you'd like to share about Christmas?

J Joi Welch 16:50

Um, you know, I just I feel like it's a time that it's family. And that's where I think your homemaking skills can really shine. I feel like it's just you want to have people over you want to be welcoming? And even I don't know if you've heard the word. I mean, I'm sure you have because it's all over ever place. But it's been it's been out there for years. The word Hygge Yes, yeah. And but it's

A Allison 17:17

not spelled like it sounds. Yeah. It's

J Joi Welch 17:19

H-y-g-g-e. Yes. In fact, I taught a class on it one time, we had to really well, we had a book club in my last neighborhood. And we had a progressive dinner right at Christmas time, we all were our pajamas. And it was in our last neighborhood. And we could walk to each other's houses. So three of us had it at their house. And so I got to share what Hygge was to all this big group of neighbors and most of more in our book club in our neighborhood, but, but it was just like a cozy feeling. So everybody brought a gift to exchange as kind of like a white elephant, but it had to be Hygge related. So it had to be either like candles or...

A Allison 18:00

Could you give me a definition of Hygge?

J Joi Welch 18:02

Well, it's a Danish word of the feeling of coziness. Okay. Okay, so, so it's when you invite people over and they just want to snuggle up on a blanket, read a book, you've got a candle burning, it's just a place you want to you feel welcomed. Yeah. And so we didn't even switch names we did the white elephant gift. And, you know, everybody would, you know, brings fuzzy socks. Yeah, you know, those kind of things are a good book that they enjoyed reading that year, or I don't think we had a throw blankets. But that's kind of the mentality of a big cup of coffee, you

A Allison 18:40

know, and you you kind of automatically associate that feeling with with winter and Christmas. And so it's very appropriate to sort of turn our thoughts that way, and I love that you brought that up, because we can really just get overwhelmed with Christmas and get overwhelmed with making everything look a certain way. But what we're talking about here with this with this concept of Hygge is it's more of a feeling. It's, you know, it's creating a certain environment and atmosphere and you don't have to do that with a lot of stuff. Or it doesn't have to be expensive. And you don't have to take a ton of time to do it. Right. So I really liked that you made that connection there.

J Joi Welch 19:16

I think it's just more of an attitude. Yeah, you know, it's not anything physical except those things do enhance it the candle and the throw, it, it enhances it, but yet it's it's the feeling of belonging

A Allison 19:32

of the which is exactly what we're all about promoting here. Great. Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts about Christmas. Sure, thanks. Just for tonight, the world will pause and give its common love a tongue in answer to the spirits laws when Christmas carols sweet are sung candles and every house will glow. Just for tonight the streets will hum with age old music soft and loud When Christmas carolers go and come. There will be peace on earth goodwill and love for every living thing. The bells will peel. The air will thrill as silver throated minstrel sing. For so brief a little time the world with kindness is a light out of the dark. The Carol's chime just for tonight. Just for tonight. Marjorie K Rawlings 1926. All right, I'm back with my friend Kim Stedman. And we're going to talk about Christmas. All right, so what does a typical Christmas day look like at your house?

K Kim Stedman 20:37

Well, a typical Christmas day now is really, really quiet. It's much different than it was when the children were home. When they were home, of course, they would get up way before we wanted to get up and want to open gifts. I always felt like the Wiseman brought three gifts. So each children, each child would get three gifts. Otherwise, it can get to be just too much and

more than it really needed to be. And we would have the typical Christmas fare, you know, the big meal and all of that as they were growing up. Now we're able to go over and see little grandchildren and what they've gotten. That's a lot of fun. One thing that we did just recently, which was really great, because our family is growing and changing. We just did a family Zoom meeting because they live in different places. What would you like the holidays to look like? How would you like to do it? How many times a year would you like to be together? Do you want to exchange gifts? Or do you not want to do that. So it was really, really great. And we felt like the result from that was really good because they have married, some of them have married. And so that married person brings in their traditions from the other side. And so we really wanted to hear that vote. I think that was very positive.

A

Allison 22:01

Yeah, that's a great idea. That's a really great idea. So what kind of food do you guys eat? On the holiday?

K

Kim Stedman 22:06

We eat? We've eaten the traditional stuff. What this last time for Easter. We got together and we everybody just brought finger foods. It kind of changes. We've had that huge Thanksgivings. But then we've also had, there's been times when we've had Mexican food. So there's not any really set in stone kind of idea. And it is getting easier now because they are bringing things that helps. And that does help.

A

Allison 22:41

You were a single parent for quite a long time. Right. So were there any unique challenges that brought at Christmas time?

K

Kim Stedman 22:48

Yes, I got to where I dreaded Christmas coming. Because first of all in the hair business, that is your busiest time, that's when everybody gets all their special things done. And so in the shop, I was very busy with chemicals and perms and color and all these extra things that I really needed to do. Because it carried me through January and February when everybody was putting it off and paying their Christmas bills. So you got band concerts and church programs and all kinds of special things. And then you have gift giving and so I got to where I was really overdone during that period, and I didn't look forward to it now but I do now I it's gotten so much better so much I can actually enjoy it again.

A

Allison 23:37

To do you have special traditions that you guys always have to do every Christmas like caroling or gingerbread or whatever?

K Kim Stedman 23:46
When I married Tom, he brought in a really fun thing. You hide this little green pickle in the Christmas, you can hide it in the Christmas tree somewhere on it. I'm not sure exactly where that comes from. But I don't know if you've ever heard of it.

A Allison 24:00
But is it like a like an ornament?

K Kim Stedman 24:03
yes. Okay. And whoever finds that gets to open up a special gift. And it's usually a game for the family. But that one is really fun. We we always want to go to church on Christmas Eve especially. We usually did stockings when they were growing up. They they really enjoyed that. Pretty traditional stuff. But I think that pickle is a lot of fun.

A Allison 24:32
Yeah, I'm gonna have to look that up and see where that tradition came from. That's unique.

K Kim Stedman 24:36
I'm not sure I want to say it's German.

A Allison 24:38
Okay, maybe so. Well, they invented the Christmas trees.

K Kim Stedman 24:43
Did they?

A Allison 24:43
Yeah, I'm Yeah, I think so. Cuz it was a I remember seeing a show about Victoria and Albert. And he was German, I think. And he brought they had the first Christmas tree in the palace. because he brought that in, okay, that became all the rage. And then that's kind of when Christmas trees took off. I might be totally butchering history based on what I know from pop culture, but I think that's actually the case. So I wouldn't be surprised if that tradition came from them. So, anyway. Alright, so the holidays can be absolutely hectic, Christmas time can

just go by in a blur, if we're not careful, we lose the whole point of why we're celebrating. So what are some of the things that you did? To sort of help keep the main thing the main thing at Christmas time?

K Kim Stedman 25:29

Well, we would read Christmas story. And like I say, the Wiseman brought three gifts. And so we didn't, I didn't want it to become all about that. Yeah, it's so easy for that to happen. And you want them to have a childhood, and you want them to have all that fun and excitement. But just keep reminding them that our greatest gift is our Lord. And he's. And so yeah, it can, can get that way. It's really easy for it to get bigger than you are. But just try to keep them focused on it. We did sing songs, and did all those things that people do. We did make gingerbread houses are those were good times, but overwhelming times? Yeah.

A Allison 26:18

I forgot to ask. I always ask this when I'm talking about the food. Do you have a particular recipe, a particular dish, whether it's your stuffing, or a pie, or something that you have to make? Or you'll have a revolt on your hands if you don't make that every year? Anything?

K Kim Stedman 26:35

No, I really don't. I spent a lot of years making turkeys. And then I my kids finally told me one day that none of them liked her. Okay, and why did I spend all these time making these turkeys? But one of my ladies I did every week, she brought me, I had told you I had that terrible dressing. She brought me a recipe. And it, it worked. Oh, and they all liked it. And so yeah, I wouldn't even attempt it without that measuring it out like she did. So that was really good. We do like pie. We everybody loves pie. And I like making those. Pretty much a lot of people have their favorites. And they think of the holidays without with that, you know, they really kind of want to put that in there. But now it's it's beginning to change again. They they would rather meet in the middle of the summer and take a trip together. So we're at a different phase of our lives. Yeah. And we're just Tom and I are just going with it. He says he's really looking forward to going to their houses and making messes.

A Allison 27:49

Yes. That's awesome. Great. Okay. Well, thanks for sharing about Christmas.

K Kim Stedman 27:57

Yes. Thank you

A Allison 28:05

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all right. Well, I'm back here with my friend Susan Macias and we're gonna talk about Christmas. So what does a typical Christmas look like at your household?

S Susan Macias 28:15

Christmas Eve, we generally go to church, and we generally have tamales on Christmas Eve. And then Christmas morning, we do a brunch. And it there's no varying. We have coffee cake. There's a sour cream coffee cake recipe, that's my mom's that we do. And an egg casserole and fruit and orange juice. You know, as long as we have that you can add cinnamon rolls or whatever. But don't take any of that away, then we're good. And, and then we have our stockings. And that's kind of a big deal to do stockings. And our kids have carried that on. They've done their stockings. And then we generally have a big lunch. That's like it too. So that makes it a two meal day more than three midday. And then there's snacky stuff and appetizers that people can eat. Yeah. So yeah.

A Allison 29:06

So big lunch, what? How many people are we talking about here?

S Susan Macias 29:10

So whoever can be here this last year, because we're getting ready to move. And so as sort of the last year at the house was a special call and everybody planned around it and everybody was here, which was so amazing. But once your kids are adults and they get married, yeah, they've got two families they're dealing with and I never want to be that difficult mother in law who's demanding. So I'd like you know, three years ahead, going, how about 2025 we all plan and so um, but our lunch is always steak and baked potato and then some kind of vegetable and we discovered that years ago. It was it's a nice meal. But men do the grilling. Yeah, and potatoes go in foil and in the Yes, it is. It is a low prep. Yeah. And it's not messy. To clean up from.

A Allison 30:00

we do the same thing.

S Susan Macias 30:01

Okay. It's it's huge. I love it. It's my it is my favorite. I don't know, it's everybody else's favorite, but I love that meal plan.

A Allison 30:08

Yeah, well, we've just had all of the Brown, I call them all the brown foods, a month before for Thanksgiving. Yes. And I'm just not ready to do that again.

S

Susan Macias 30:16

I'm not either.

A

Allison 30:16

And we do like a big appetizer thing on Christmas Eve. And so you know, and that's where I do the majority of the cooking so I love the Christmas Day or we do it at night Christmas night. steak dinner, because really, I don't I'm pretty hands off on that. Yeah, so I'm with you on that one. It's great. Any special desserts?

S

Susan Macias 30:34

Yes, I have. It's called Pumpkin torte. And I can share that recipe.

A

Allison 30:39

I would love it. Yeah.

S

Susan Macias 30:40

So I never liked pumpkin I never liked pumpkin pie was the only thing I grew up with, you know, back then they didn't do chocolate chip pumpkin muffins. But so we lived in Germany. And this. She was she was American, but she lived in Germany long time. And I think she got the recipe over there. And it's like a cheesecake layer. And then this fluffy pumpkin layer and cool whip. And so that is required.

A

Allison 31:05

Okay, that sounds wonderful. Yes, we would love for you to share that with us. And we'll put that on the website. Do you guys have any special holiday traditions like caroling or gingerbread or something you do every year?

S

Susan Macias 31:18

Um, our big thing that our kids love is we call it sibling Secret Santa. So we started it, obviously when the kids were little, and all of a sudden, you realize we cannot sustain everybody buying everybody something is just too much. So we started pulling names out of the hat. And they just love it. And and as you you don't get in until you're married, or even engaged. You're not in sibling Secret Santa. And you got to you got to have the ring. And so then they they just go in and we have an it's a huge fun thing is it's a secret, sort of, and then it's the most fun like we do all the presents and then we do sibling secret Santa's when our kids were little a fun

tradition we had another just trying to keep constraints around Christmas. I can't. I think I read it somewhere. Everything I did that was smart was because I got it from somebody else. But it was three gifts. And it was a want a need and a surprise. And it was you know, Jesus got three gifts, you got three gifts. And so the want would be you know, they'd have their list of things that they wanted. And they're surprised I really tried to listen through the year. What was the thing that they liked? Yeah. And then obviously, then the need was, you know, tennis shoes. No socks traditionally always came in the stocking. In fact, as they got older, they're like, Mom, why are you not giving us socks anymore? It's like, I can't give everybody socks still, it's expensive.

A Allison 32:48

They're lik, But I don't buy socks all year because I know they're gonna be in my stocking. Yeah, that's hilarious.

S Susan Macias 32:52

Oh the socks...I'll give you one quick motherhood tip. Sure. Yeah, I, at some point decided on different brands for different boys with socks and that is the only brand I bought each boy. And I always knew whose socks...

A Allison 33:06

Whose were whose. That is so smart.

S Susan Macias 33:08

And the same with underwear. And then as they get into different sizes and stuff, you just kept buying the same brand.

A Allison 33:15

Well, because even when they're not, because my boys are all about two years apart, you know, boom, boom, boom, every two years. But at some point, the sizes really aren't that different. And so it's really hard to tell what belongs and then they fight. Yes. So if this kid wears Hanes, and this one wears, you know, the Fruit of the loom, then we know if you stole, if you have Hanes in your drawer, we know that you stole your brother's underwear or socks or whatever. That's a great tip. Thank you for sharing that. Okay, so we know holidays can be just crazy hectic. So how do you how do you deal with that? What are some things that you've learned over the years to maintain margin, and kind of keep the main thing the main thing?

S Susan Macias 33:58

Um, limiting the gifts, limiting the you know, really sticking within budget. And my new way of

keeping sanity now that I have so many people, because gift giving became very, very stressful to me. I just I wasn't enjoying it at all, because I didn't know if they'd like it. Yeah, there's an app called Giftster, and everybody can put what they want with links. Okay, there. That's grand. I literally at the end of November, beginning of December, get on there and I get everybody's I add up to my amount that I get everybody the same amount of stuff. And I get their stuff and it comes and I wrap it. And I know that they're getting what they want. Yeah. And that is that has been a huge I'm not having to go out and fight the stores. And so if I do that, it's because it's fun and want to get out for fun shopping day. But the stress of that was it I wasn't having any fun with that. Yeah. So that's been a huge thing. I really want to enjoy Christmas. I want to sit with my feet up And then all the Christmas movies. We love all the Christmas movies and we watch those and you got to have time.

A

Allison 35:05

Yes, you do. And we think we're going to have you tell yourself okay, I'll have time to do that later. I'll have time to that later. And you don't just sneaks up on you like that, you know, especially here in the US where we have Thanksgiving. And then literally, yes, four weeks later, Christmas right on its heels. And it just it comes so quickly. So that's really smart that you said, you start thinking about it in September. I know some people are so organized, they do shopping all your round. I'm not one of those people. I've tried to do that before. And then I forget that I bought something for somebody

S

Susan Macias 35:34

and I don't know where I put it. I No, no, that's not a good plan. So that's great. Actually, you just gave me more credit, because I didn't say September. I said December. Oh, almost always during the beginning of December. Oh, no. Okay. That's, yeah, all of a sudden, I'm going man, I'm good. Oh, no, I'm not. I don't do that.

A

Allison 35:52

Well, still the beginning beginning of December. Yes, listeners,

S

Susan Macias 35:56

get it done. Get it over with and,

A

Allison 35:59

and then enjoy the rest of the season. Yeah. And take take the time to to really soak in those moments and sing carols with your grandkids and whatnot. So great. Yeah. Anything else you want to share about Christmas?

S

Susan Macias 36:11

sending a gingerbread house in the mail. It allows a little bit of room to move, but it keeps it pretty secure in that box. Okay, and my final tip is avoid using chocolate candy on your gingerbread house, I would say in general, if you're going to do Gingerbread, don't put chocolate on your house, whether you're shipping it or not chocolate, it just it's very hard to pull it off. If you're going to pull a piece off the house to eat, it will usually just squish in your hands. And then of course, if you're mailing it, and you put chocolate on it, and you're mailing it anywhere where there's not temperature control, it could get too hot, and then it melts and then you have a big, sticky chocolate mess on your hands when your person who you mailed it to gets it in the mail. And that's no fun. And finally, to wrap up our discussion on Gingerbread, I want to share an ideal with you. This is something that I've done in the past, when I had very small children. That was when I started doing gingerbread and I would do it with them in limited amounts. Okay, I didn't want my children hopped up for three weeks on the sugar from the gingerbread making festivities. So we kept it pretty limited with what I would allow the children to help me with. But I wanted to be able to share this activity with someone and I wasn't willing to do a kid's gingerbread party. So I thought why not make a girls night out of it, I could have an opportunity to visit with my girlfriends, they would have an opportunity to make their very own gingerbread house without their kids clamoring for more candy and trying to you know, topple one side of the house or the other, it would just be a really pleasant night out. So that's what I did. I hosted several girls night out gingerbread house parties over the years. And here's a couple of tips. If you're going to try this with your girlfriends, I would suggest that you have everybody bring a savory snack to share. That means just heavy appetizers that are not on the sweet side that are on the savory side because you're going to be surrounded by all this sugar candy gingerbread icing, you're going to need something salty to go with all of that. And then also have each of your guests bring their favorite kind of candy with which to decorate the houses. No chocolate, of course, remember we already talked about that. But hard candies and gummy candies are optimal for decorating a gingerbread house. And once they bring those, then you just spread them all out down the table and everybody can share and you have a really great variety and you find some really interesting candy that way. So another tip is have everything ready ahead of time, obviously. But I mean way ahead of time. Don't wait until two days before your party. If you're going to make your own gingerbread, don't wait until two days before to make the gingerbread. Go ahead and make it like two or three weeks early and put it in the freezer, it freezes really well. You don't have to make your own gingerbread, go out and buy some kits that are pre made. And you just provide the home and the table for your girlfriends to gather around and have this fun time of fellowship together. I also recommend for the icing. Of course, like I said before, use royal icing because it is the best for constructing gingerbread houses. But you can actually buy this buy the tub I think which will be more expensive. But it will be more economical on your time. You'll save a lot of time that way by not having to make batches and batches and batches of this icing for everybody's houses. Now one of the things I learned one year when I had about 12 women making houses at my at my home, I was making icing all night long because I had given every single one of them their own piping bag, and they would go through the icing so quickly that way, I do not recommend you do that I don't do that anymore. I will have two or three piping bags ready to go with different tips on them for all the ladies to share. But as far as what they use to put their house together, I just put little bowls of royal icing and plastic knives in front of each woman. And they just use that as their glue to glue on all the different pieces of candy. It makes the icing go a lot farther and it's a lot less work for you as the hostess. And then finally, as far as your guest list goes. This is a really great opportunity for you to have an eclectic guest list. I've done this before with ladies from church. I've done it with ladies in my neighborhood who I didn't really know very well but nobody turned down the opportunity to come and do this. That was the era had 12 women I just recommend that you invite people who all know you but maybe don't know one another. And that way you get a really interesting group of people making these houses together. And it

makes for some really fun conversations, maybe even do Joy's idea from her segment that we just listened to about friends inviting friends. So maybe you invite three of your friends and ask them each to bring a friend, somebody that you don't know. And that would be really interesting because you get to meet some new people and have some really fun and engaging conversations around the table. So to eat or not to eat. That is the question. Yes, we do eat our gingerbread houses, I don't spray them with shellack and save them from year to year. We build the house, we look at it for a couple of days, and then we start eating it. So Now eventually, the structure is compromised to the point that it collapses. And whether or not yours falls due to builder error or to snack attacking, you can still enjoy your house and show off your sense of humor. Just put a large toy dinosaur or a big Godzilla or some other kind of monster in the middle of the wreckage, and let them take the blame. Alright, I am back with my friend Kelly Eakins and I want to talk about Christmas. So what does a typical Christmas day look like for your family?

K

Kelly Eakins 46:10

Typically, first thing is Christmas Eve. We start by going to Christmas Eve service. And then we usually will go down maybe to the Riverwalk and just look at the Christmas lights and have dinner together and look at the Christmas lights. That's a lot of fun. Yeah, for us. We've been will pick other places that we can go as well. This past Christmas. It ended up that Mark and I just took grandkid and we went up to Johnson City. Marble Falls yes to look at the lights there and go have a meal together and have cookies because mom and dad weren't there. So we could do as many sweets as we wanted. I love being a Grammy. But that's our Christmas Eve and then I have to be careful what I say because my grandkids might listen to this. Yes, yes, yes. So we have chores on Christmas Eve after putting the kids to bed, you know, and making sure that the house is all ready for Christmas morning. So Christmas morning, we get up and then we have stockings, we see what has been left in the stockings. And that's always a fun time. We have to we have to beat the kids up so that we can be sure and get Yeah, cheers before everything is destroyed. Yeah. But that's okay. That's all part of it. And it's fun. So we do our Christmas stockings, and then we have we stop and fix breakfast. And every Christmas morning we have homemade sausage balls. And fruit in scrambled eggs that kind of thing. But homemade sausage balls are the main thing.

A

Allison 47:55

What is a homemade sausage ball?

K

Kelly Eakins 47:57

Oh goodness, it's it's so easy to do. But it's so good. So you use bulk sausage. Yeah. Grated cheese, and Bisquick and mix it all together, make little balls and then bake it in the oven. Yeah, and they are yummy.

A

Allison 48:11

Okay, so can you share that recipe with us? And we can put it on the website? Sure. Okay, awesome

awesome.

K

Kelly Eakins 48:16

I'll be glad to. It is always the biggest question. When we're approaching Christmas. We're gonna have sausage balls, right? Yes, we're gonna. And we usually put the sausage balls together Christmas Eve. Okay, evening, we'll do that sitting around watching a Christmas movie. And then you throw them in the oven and then we throw them in the oven after we do the stockings. Yeah, that's smart and make whatever we're going to have with it. And whatever we're going to have with it isn't near as big a deal as the sausage. As a child growing up Christmas morning, we we did it very similar where we would have stockings and then have breakfast, but Christmas Day is also my dad's birthday. Oh, and so we would celebrate my dad's birthday at breakfast. And then after breakfast, the rest of the day was pretty much Christmas Day.

A

Allison 49:08

Good idea. Yeah,

K

Kelly Eakins 49:10

it was a lot of fun. And it was always special that my dad shared a birthday with Christ. And one year when we were traveling home with the kids for Christmas, Steven asked, he's he was young, I would say probably maybe third grade, maybe younger than third grade. And he said you know what? I'm just wondering who's older Papa or Christ?

A

Allison 49:38

Did you tell him he said that?

K

Kelly Eakins 49:40

Oh yeah.

A

Allison 49:43

Oh my gosh.

K

Kelly Eakins 49:45

Like, I'm not sure who's older. So we thought that was pretty funny. But um, so I'm Christmas day after we have breakfast then we all move to the living room. And we usually have the tree in the living room. And now that we're we're having more grandchildren getting older, it's

becoming very important to have Christmas in their home, you know, because we want them to be developing these same types of traditions. And so this slash Christians that we spent with Sarah and Garrett, we spent Mark and I spent the night at their house Christmas Eve. So that would be their first thing in the morning. And but we're doing very similar traditions. Yeah, but Christmas around the in the living room is one or two. Handing presence out. We make piles everybody gets their pile. And then we go one by one opening gifts so that everybody can see what what they're getting. And share that. And then of course, It's total chaos. Yes. Yes. Got to put toys together, got to get batteries and start trying everything out. Yeah. And then for Christmas meal, if we have it at our house, and we've done this since we lived in Sicily, this was something that kids came up with. Our traditional Christmas meal is homemade fajitas. And we do we start the you know, marinating the meat about three days prior. And we make homemade pickles guy. Oh, homemade guacamole. We grate the cheese. I don't buy bagged cheese.

A Allison 51:25
Yeah,

K Kelly Eakins 51:26
I'm very much a homemade type of person.

A Allison 51:29
Do you make your own tortillas

K Kelly Eakins 51:31
we have in the past. Yeah, I've given that up. I just don't have the time.

A Allison 51:36
Well, there's some really good tortillas around here.

K Kelly Eakins 51:38
Three are. I mean, it's hard to beat HEBs even the homemade tortillas in stores. So yeah, we've we've relegated to doing that. Yeah, that way. That's one of those keep it in the rails. That's a chore that I can give somebody else that responsibility. Yeah, I Yeah. So. But it's a lot of fun. We do that we really don't have any special type of dessert or anything. We make Christmas cookies through the season. So anything like that, that we have, yeah, we'll just share, but we make enough fajitas that we're able to eat on it all day long. Just kind of leave food out to

graze. And the best we just spend time together just, you know, reading new books, playing new games, there's whatever the kids get for Christmas sharing in that and, and, and spending time as a family.

A

Allison 52:31

Yeah. That's great. Yeah. So we talked about keeping it between the rails, holidays can just be out of control, that whole season leading up to Christmas. What are some ways that you found to sort of keep the main thing the main thing? You know, like, getting the tortillas from HEB instead of making them

K

Kelly Eakins 52:50

One of the things that I do try and practice I do it and trying to do Christmas shopping early and get that out of the way where I'm not spending a lot of time running to stores and running from one place to the other or even just being online shopping for stuff. It's that is time consuming and that can take for me that can take away from the JOY Yes, of even giving. You know I I'm buying gifts because I want to give. But when you get to a point when you wait to the last minute and you get to a point I just have to have a gift. Yeah. It's not very joyful. That's, that's no fun for anybody. Yeah.

A

Allison 53:28

So when you say early, like how early?

K

Kelly Eakins 53:31

Well, this year. Sarah and I are going to take a birthday trip. My birthday is in October, and she and I are have decided that we're going to go away for that birthday weekend. Yeah. To do Christmas shopping. So that's an October okay. Now, when we lived in Sicily, that was tricky, because we had we were on a very small base. We had very small options. Yeah. Shopping. Yes, I shopped all year long. It was wonderful. Yeah, my kids, my husband, oh, my husband would say what happened? My kids thought they were in heaven because I would buy as I saw things and just put it away. Well then when it came time to wrap as like we're a little over the top again.

A

Allison 54:18

Yeah. So how did you maintain balance in this busy season?

K

Kelly Eakins 54:23

A big part of it is just remembering that the important thing for one What are we celebrating that? That has been something we have taught the kids from day one. Christmas is not about

Santa, although we love Santa. It's not about the stockings. It's not about the decorations. We celebrate Christmas because we are celebrating the birth of Christ. Yeah. And that is what is important. And so we try to keep that focus with everything we do. Right. We still love the secular side we enjoy the Christmas music, the fun Christmas jingles. I love the Christian Christmas music. It's just incredible to me. We start listening to that the day after Thanksgiving. Yes, because I'm not allowed to listen to it any earlier.

A

Allison 55:15

I am one of those people don't play Christmas music in my house before the day after Thanksgiving.

K

Kelly Eakins 55:21

But the day after Thanksgiving, it's on that's on all the time. But keeping the focus on Christ, and then we're celebrating a birthday. Wait, birthdays are a big deal. In my family. We celebrate big birthdays. So I think Christ's birthday we just celebrate a little bit bigger. Yeah. And make it special. It is very important not to give in to constant parties and knowing how to say this is important. We're going to take part in this. This is something that can wait. Yeah. And and teaching the kids that you know that sometimes, it's just more important to get your rest. Yeah, than it is to keep up with everything. And we have always celebrated everything in our home. Whether it be a holiday or a birthday. The celebration is about celebrating that person or that holiday. It does not have to be on a certain day. Yeah. So even the years that Sarah and Garrett go to see Garrett's family for Christmas, which we we kind of swap off one year, we get Thanksgiving, and they get Christmas and the next year we get Christmas and they get Thanksgiving. Yeah. So it's fun. That's kind of how we did it when we were growing up as well. But even on the years that Sara and Garrett go to Florida for Christmas, just spend Christmas with his family. We make a point of having a Christmas celebration. Yeah. And on that day, whatever day of the month it is. We have sausage balls for breakfast. Because that's how you do Christmas. Yeah. So those are things that just keeping in mind that it doesn't have to be perfect. Yeah. And you can do it differently. And you can do it another time. It's about coming together. And it has nothing to do with the day on the calendar. Yeah. And keeping that in mind has helped us and and knowing that we can't do it all. We just can't. And even with our small group when we have a Christmas celebration, we might have it in November. Yeah. To alleviate right. One more thing in December that you have for sure. For sure. So it's it's just a matter of being purposeful about what you're doing and planning.

A

Allison 57:48

Yeah, that's great. That's great advice. All right. Anything else you want to share about Christmas?

K

Kelly Eakins 57:54

Another Christmas tradition we have? I'm only allowed to do jigsaw puzzles at Christmas time. Oh, okay. Because they consume me. Okay. So every Christmas there will be at least one jigsaw puzzle on the table. And yeah, after the season, I have to put them away and I'm not

allowed to get them out again until next Christmas season.

A

Allison 58:18

Do you just totally zone out and like focus completely on the puzzle?

K

Kelly Eakins 58:22

I do. And it's amazing. That is, you know, I had never thought about this. But that would be the best diet material for me because I don't even want to eat when I'm doing a jigsaw puzzle have to finish this puzzle. I have to tell my husband that you're gonna have to open it up that I can do it all year long to help my diet. But yes, I don't do laundry. I am so fixated. I could just spend hours upon hours sitting at a jigsaw puzzle. Wow. I love them.

A

Allison 58:50

Oh, I would go crazy.

K

Kelly Eakins 58:51

Yeah, that's good. Oh, so that is a that's a big Christmas thing. But yeah, family is the most important. There's a family is the most important thing. I think. Yes, it is. Overall. Yeah. And that would be your immediate family. Your church family, your community family. I mean, family is important relationship relationship. Yeah.

A

Allison 59:17

What we keep with us forever. Yes, so Well, thanks for sharing about your Christmas.

K

Kelly Eakins 59:22

Sure.

A

Allison 59:25

Well, that's it for episode two of the art of home podcast holiday home making 2021 We hope you've been inspired and encouraged by the tips and recipes, memories and reflections shared by our guests. If you haven't already received your copy of the companion e-magazine for this Holiday Mini season, what are you waiting for? In this fun little magazine we share the beloved family recipes our guest talk about as well as their favorite Christmas movies and songs and fun photos of them from Christmases past. To get your free copy just click the link in the show notes or go to theartofhomepodcast.com/freegift . We won't spam you. I promise. Email is just

the best way for us to let you know when we have a new episode available or new homemaking resources for you. Thank you so much for listening and commenting and supporting us. We are so grateful to be a part of the homemaking revolution that's happening all around the world. We'll be back next Wednesday with another special Christmas episode featuring four more homemakers. Until then, keep practicing your art of making a home for the holidays.