

AoH Holiday Homemaking 2021_Ep1_Athena_Alma_Jan_Joyce - 11:1...

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SPEAKERS

Athena Oden, Allison, Jan Lockhart, Joyce Newhall, Alma Wakefield



Allison 00:03

Merry Christmas, homemakers. And welcome to the art of holiday home podcast, where we are exploring how homemakers cultivate a place to belong during the most wonderful time of the year. I'm your host Allison weeks. I'm a wife. I'm a mom. I'm a homemaker of 30 years. Now, I know that some of you may be thinking, I want this to be the most wonderful time of the year. But there is so much to do. And so many expectations, I am so stressed. And it's only November. Never fear. We are not here to give you more to do or to overwhelm you with Pinterest standards that no one human could possibly live up to. As always, we are here to encourage and inspire you in your art of holiday homemaking. It's unique to you. So take bits and pieces from these stories and just use what works for your situation. Or not at all. Just enjoy the stories for what they are. Each of the women we featured in a homemaker portrait throughout this past year will share some holiday memories and stories, family traditions, recipes and tips on how they keep from losing sight of what really matters in this season. You will also hear a few fun ideas and tips from my 30 years of holiday homemaking, as well as some fun poems, maybe a few historical tips and other Christmas goodies. Now, what's Christmas without a little gift giving, we have a very special gift to say thank you to our listeners who have helped us grow in this first year of the art of home podcast, we've put together a delightful little ebook that includes all the holiday recipes that you will hear about from these homemakers over the next four weeks, as well as some super fun retro photos of these ladies. Some of them are as little girls in front of the tree, we've got a few of them with when they were teenagers with maybe some big 80s hair or some 70s bell bottoms. It's so fun. You don't want to miss this, and it's absolutely free. If you're subscribed to our email list, you'll be receiving your digital copy soon, so check your mailbox. But if you're not subscribed, you will want to do that right away so you don't miss out on getting your copy. Just click the link in the show notes below to subscribe or just go to the art of home podcast.com forward slash subscribe, we will not spam you and we will not sell your email to anybody. We will simply send you a notice every time there's a brand new episode of The Art of home. And beginning next year, you will get a quarterly newsletter highlighting the stories and the resources, the recipes, anything that was featured on the show throughout that quarter. So whether you're decking the halls or getting a jump on holiday baking, we know you will enjoy these holiday stories of home. Okay, I am back here with my friend Athena Odin. And we are actually not going to talk about Christmas, we are going to talk about Thanksgiving. So Athena, can you tell us about your holiday traditions?

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Athena Oden 03:11

Sure. Christmas for our family. And I have to guess this might be true for several families was not always a pleasant experience. There were some relational issues in the family. And I'm sure people are dealing other people have dealt with that too, about the amount of time we'd spend at one house versus the amount of time that we spent at another house versus the pressures that were on us to be certain places and do certain things for the holidays. And so as our children began to grow, we realize this was really very difficult for us. So we wanted to pull away and not pull away from Christmas. We participated with our families in that but we wanted to pull away and have a holiday of our own. And so we began to because of some of that turmoil, have Chris, excuse me have Thanksgiving at our own home. And we invited our family to come to see us. And we developed the tradition the way that we wanted to do it. And Thanksgiving is a course of very important time and a very important subject. And we all need to think about Thanksgiving to the Lord. So we kind of built it around that. And it didn't become just Thanksgiving day it became a week we would have everyone come all the family from both sides of the family whoever was willing to come right and some in the situation were not willing to come in this was kind of part of our pulling away from some situations. Yeah, and that's okay. So we invited them every year. Sometimes they did sometimes they didn't. Yeah, but when everyone arrived often it was Tuesday night or Wednesday night. And we would start off with a big bowl of chili for everybody as they came in and various stages and hours from from four o'clock in the Afternoon to midnight, there was always a bowl of chili on that David had made good venison chili at that. And then we would start finding places to put people up. And so depending on what home we were in the we had a little barn or outhouse that we would have children in, in sleeping bags all over the floor. We've had people on couches, people on sleeping bags in the living room, just everything you can imagine. And everyone would stay with us. If occasionally there was someone who needed a hotel room, they were pretty far and few between, you know, though, that wasn't something that we did very often. One year, we actually borrowed a Winnebago parked in our driveway, and had families sleeping there. Good idea. We've also split up all the girls and all the boys, we could cram all the boys in one room and all the girls in another room. And we put the kids out in a tent in the front yard before

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Allison 05:55

did you have like a number system for the bathroom? How did that work?

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Athena Oden 05:59

No, you were on your own, you have to figure that out. fight your way. And they had too much to do to get in the middle of that argument. Yeah. And so there were three of us sister in laws, that for all those years, pretty much put pull the Thanksgiving meal and things together. And we did that when all of our children were young. The our brothers and brother in laws were very sweet. The day after Thanksgiving to take care of all the children, while we sister in laws went and did something ourselves, we might go shopping, or we might just go out to eat or go to lunch. And there would occasionally be the call that well, we're at ER with one of the kids, we've got this under control. So don't worry about it, we began to learn that they probably did have it under control. And it was just fine. Yeah. So now that all of us all three of us sister in law's or grandparents, we still save that day. And we still go out to that go out that day. And all the children still stay home together with the kids. Some of the children now who are on into their 30s, we have probably you know, 10 or 12 cousin's two children together. Some of them are into their 30s, they will get together and go out for a day or two as well. And then on Saturday, we always have a gingerbread house competition. And we will take graham crackers and build gingerbread houses. And we have the

issue is that you are allowed to build if you are a child, or you are allowed to help your own child to build. So some of these kids have grown up doing this and they now are helping their own children build. Grandma comes around after everything is put away. And judges those two, there's no names on them. And of course, you know that the three year olds is not going to be as beautiful as the engineer son in laws will be right. But she still judges them.

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Allison 07:57

How long does it take the children to come off of the sugar high? From all the candy?

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Athena Oden 08:00

Yeah, from all the candy, it takes a while. That's why Sunday afternoon is pretty much go out and play by yourselves. Because yes, they're wearing off all that sugar. And we have, we have a wonderful tradition with the food too. We all work together to do the food. So one sister in law will take Friday, and she'll prepare everything for Friday. And so the other two sister in law's considered out. And another one will take Saturday. And then my husband and I will take Thanksgiving Day and have that all prepared. And so it's a really wonderful way for us to all participate, but not have to be in the kitchen at the same time. Right? There are games going on all the time all over the place. And so you have 97 year old grandma playing games, domino games with the younger ones and the grandkids and, and it's just wonderful. We would have ping pong tournaments and David's mother up until she was about 80 would win a lot of them. Wow. She was amazing. And we'll have a whole ping pong tournament session. We have had three legged races, yeah, with five year olds to 80 year olds. It just whatever we can come up with. It's fun to pair

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Allison 09:08

Did you pair the five year old with the 80 year old?

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Athena Oden 09:11

We paired the five year old actually, with the 17 year old again, believe it or not, they went very far and very fast.

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Allison 09:18

Yeah, well,

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Athena Oden 09:20

okay. Yeah. Interesting. And our long box are a big part of what we do. So it's a long holiday. For us. It's a good four day holiday, if not more, depending on when some people come in. Okay. It's also a time of reflection. David will usually come up with a question for us and we will all gather as a family in one room, sit in a circle and talk about what we might be thankful for that year. One year David asked the question, what was the most difficult heart wrenching thing you went through this year?

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Allison 09:53

Oh wow.

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Athena Oden 09:54

How can you be thankful for that? So we and we will go around it round as a family all knowing each other very intimately and now knowing each other even more intimately, yeah, about how their year has gone.

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Allison 10:07

Yeah. That's a great suggestion even for people listening who, you know where this is being aired during the Christmas season getting ready for Christmas, but word, these are these these ideas are applicable really? Anytime. And we have listeners internationally, you know, so you don't all celebrate Thanksgiving, like we do here in the States. But you could absolutely do this exercise at Christmas. Yeah, absolutely. Because it that it's at the end of the year is a good time for reflection over all that's happened over the past 12 months. And I really love that idea.

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Athena Oden 10:39

It's really helpful to to look at all of those things with thanksgiving. Yes, whether they're difficult or not. Yes. And so it's it's, it's an important time for us to share those things with each other as a family too, and create that intimacy with your family, right?

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Allison 10:54

And really, really bringing you together to be able to empathize with one another. Right? Understand what you know, what you've gone through that year, right. Okay, so what about the food? I want to know, what do you guys eat on Thanksgiving? Well, on

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Athena Oden 11:07

Thanksgiving Day, we have the some of the traditionals we have the traditional Turkey. And of course, we made brine it differently or cook it differently. We've gotten to the point now that we're smoking the turkey, we will have traditional dressing, which was my grandmother's and my mother's recipe and we continue that my daughter has taken up baking the pies, which was a traditional thing. We always had pecan pies, and pumpkin pies and all different kinds of pies. And we have, she will come maybe on Tuesday or Wednesday and she'll bake 10 pies. And then last us all week, we have some of the traditional vegetables. Yeah. And that part is fairly traditional. Okay, but the rest of the week, we do some different things. And it's kind of fun. What we've done these past few years now that the the younger generation or the second generation, as we call it is old enough, is David has set up a menu, we have the food here and ready to go. And they are sous chefs. Okay, and so each family will take a sous chef day, and they will get everything together and one or two of them will cook it and they clean up and do all the dishes. So the rest of the family gets the rest from all that. That's great. And it's a it's a wonderful idea about, I'd say three

years ago, my three sister in laws and I said, we're tired. We're tired of cooking the turkey, we're tired of putting the dressing all together, we're tired of being in the kitchen, while all the little grandkids are running around and we don't get to play with them. So we gave the second generation, which basically was I would say 12 to 30 years old. We gave them all aprons and said second generation, Thanksgiving,

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Allison 12:52

Oh nice.

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Athena Oden 12:53

We told them to get ready with a group text. Find somebody who's a leader. And you guys split up making the turkey, the dressing, whatever. And you guys bring it all together for Thanksgiving Day. That is awesome, did it, they did it. And it was fabulous. They did it without us interfering. They did it without telling them how to cook it. And they did it well. And so now the second generation kind of gathers up that Thanksgiving stuff to give us a little bit of a rest.

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Allison 13:24

That is wonderful. That's really good for you for passing on your knowledge for passing on responsibility. And that's so great.

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Athena Oden 13:34

Well, I I might not call it passing on, I might call it pushing on. Because it took us a little bit to convince them to do it. We finally pushed it upon.

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Allison 13:44

Like if you want to eat right, you have to write the food. There are some

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Athena Oden 13:47

in that generation that can cook in Arizona that don't cook in that generation. So

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Allison 13:50

so they've been doing this for the last three years. I'd say last

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Athena Oden 13:53

year. Yeah. Last three years.

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Allison 13:55

Did the reluctant ones come a long way. Like do they actually enjoy it now?

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Athena Oden 13:59

Yes. Oh, yeah. Yeah, the reluctant ones did and then some of them came out just shining. And we thought we never knew these kids could cook like this was amazing. That's cool.

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Allison 14:09

Did they throw anything unusual into it? Like did they take your, your traditional menu and then bring, you know, new ideas and fresh things into it?

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Athena Oden 14:18

Yes, a few things they did. But I have to admit that they enjoy those traditional foods as much as we do. Yeah. So it might have been a little bit of a different flavoring or a little bit of a different, you know, sweet potato dish. But

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Allison 14:30

isn't that funny? How we, I mean, my kids are the same way. You know, if there's not sweet potato casserole, on Thanksgiving, there might be a revolt,

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Athena Oden 14:39

right? Absolutely. Somebody had to have green beans because yeah, that was an absolute necessity. But they they changed it up a little bit but they wanted to stay with the tradition and that was part of what they wanted.

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Allison 14:50

Is there a particular family recipe that like like that, that must you must have this?

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Athena Oden 14:56

Absolutely every year? It is my grandmother's Mother's dressing, cornbread dressing cornbread

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Allison 15:02

dressing. Now let's, these, let's clarify for our listeners the difference between dressing and stuffing

dressing. Now let's, there. Let's clarify for our listeners the difference between dressing and stuffing.

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Athena Oden 15:08

Okay, well, so in the south, we call it dressing. But it might be called stuffing elsewhere. Okay, so it's a sweet corn bread kind you made with sugar that we start with. So we start with a sweet corn bread and then some dry herb bread. And we mix those together with the A eggs and the vegetables and the celery and the giblets as well. Right. And we cook that in a dish. So spoon it out.

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Allison 15:38

You do not put it into the bird. We can and we do you have in the past? Yes. Okay,

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Athena Oden 15:43

we don't eat it out of the bird. Okay. Yeah. Okay, you don't eat it out of the bird. We just eat it out of the because my goodness, everybody you have to make

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Allison 15:50

so much. That's kind of been the issue. We've never done it in the bird because it just doesn't make enough. So you might as well just make it in the, you know, like a casserole dish.

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Athena Oden 16:00

And and how are you going to have a turkey and dressing sandwich if you don't have enough of it? Exactly. So we do that too.

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Allison 16:06

Yeah, that's great. Cool. Is that a secret family recipe? Or can you share it with I can share it? Okay, great. Well, we will we will put that on the website so that everybody can enjoy that. All right, well, the holidays can be completely hectic and crazy. And even in this situation, you're talking about having lots of people in your home for many days. Lots of meals to be planned, all that kind of stuff. So how do you keep from just going nuts?

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Athena Oden 16:34

Yeah, we've it's taken some time to kind of figure that out. But one of the things that we've always done is it we've always tried to reserve time to do nothing. And so you can escape the sister in laws can escape into a patio and have a conversation, which is the three of them, right? The kids can escape to the front yard and play and the brothers get to spend some time together. And I think that's what makes it so enjoyable is that we have that time of intimacy when small groups and then that time of intimacy in large groups. And to keep it from being kind of nuts and crazy. We've always divided up the responsibilities. Yes,

none of the people that were here. We're trying not to participate those responsibilities. So we've always been able to divide up either you take a whole day of cooking, and I'll sit by or, you know, a family take a whole day of being a sous chef or that type of thing.

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Allison 17:32

How did you How do you prepare, before everybody gets here? Like what do you? I mean, do you go on this massive grocery shop? And yes,

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Athena Oden 17:39

well, so here's, here's how we do it now. Now that we've got two or three generations going on now, and actually four generations of grandmas gets to come. We at this point, David being the good cookie is will make a menu for the whole week. Okay. And that excludes Thanksgiving Day, David, and I do David and I do Thanksgiving Day. They don't have to make that. But we'll he'll make a menu for the whole week for breakfast, lunch and dinner, we will go and purchase that food so that these people who are traveling long distances don't have to carry ice chests and don't have to bring things in or go to the grocery store when they get here. So we'll have all that food set up and ready and a menu set up and ready. And then David may be if he's cooking out on the grill, they're doing everything else. So one day will be Jimmy's family, and they will make breakfast, they will do the dishes, they will make lunch, they will make dinner. And then the next day, Chris's family will come in and do the same thing. And Jimmy's family will rest.

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Allison 18:41

So everybody's pitching in on the labor. But you guys have done the pre planning. You planned ahead what's going to be prepared?

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Athena Oden 18:47

And it actually made it easier when we finally went to doing Yeah, because it was really difficult on having the families come in and maybe then have to make a trip to the grocery store. And oh, sure that eliminates our time together. Yeah, it's easier if we can plan something that's simple. And we know we have the capacity to do here and do it easily.

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Allison 19:04

Great. Cool. Very good. Well, anything else you want to share about holidays?

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Athena Oden 19:09

No, just to say that holidays are important no matter what day it is, whether it's Christmas or Thanksgiving or Memorial Day or whatever, those are important for us. But I think that the thing we really need to focus on is gathering around with each other. Yeah. And doing that in the Lord.

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Allison 19:26

Yeah. Great. Thanks for sharing. From our happy home through the world we roam one week in all the year making winter spring with the joy we bring for Christmas tide is here. Now the Eastern star shines from afar to light the poorest home, hearts warmer grow gifts freely flow for Christmas tide has come. Now gay trees rise before young eyes of bloom with tempting cheer. Black voices sing and Blythe bells ring for Christmas tide is here. Oh, happy time. Oh, bless a time that draws us all so near. Welcome, dear day, all creatures say, for Christmas tide is here. Louisa May Alcott, 1885. All right, I'm back here with my friend Alma. And we're gonna talk about Christmas. So what does a typical Christmas look like in your house? Or what did it look like when you had your kids still at home, or you can tell me about both?

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Alma Wakefield 20:29

Well, like Christmas, most of the years are in California. So Christmas was not a snowy Christmas, right at all. But sometimes we would go to the mountains where the snow was, which wasn't that far away. And there was a cabin that someone would let us go to, which was nice. But Christmas when I think of it in California, we reached out to people during that time, because we didn't have extended family. I there. And when I was growing up, it was extended family. So that's how I thought of Christmas. But in California, that was impossible. And so we just reached out to people that didn't have extended family, or a few times I don't think it was every year but a number of times. We did homeless feeding just to reach out to people. Did you go to a shelter? Or do we went to a shelter. And another time when we didn't go to a shelter? We fixed some TV dinners, I think it was and drove around and look for people on the street. Oh, wow. You know, and had the kids get out and hand them a meal. That was not a special meal. But it was turkey and dressing still. Because we didn't know who we were going to meet or where we were going to meet them. And so we did that one year. But traditionally with the family. We did stockings we did Christmas tree we did decorations, baked cookies, Christmas cookies, we did those things that most families I think enjoy doing.

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Allison 22:02

What was your typical Christmas Day or Christmas Eve menu?

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Alma Wakefield 22:06

Christmas Eve menu was finding a pizza place. I'm not sure how they got started. But we found out that most pizza places are closed. And so it would be quite an adventure on Christmas Eve to get in the car and try to find a pizza place that was open.

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Allison 22:22

So did you did you like look at Christmas lights while you were driving?

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Alma Wakefield 22:28

Yes. And I don't know how they got started. But we started doing that. And then we wanted to do it every year. So we did that during those years. On Christmas morning I fixed creamed eggs, which is kind of like

creams Benedict, okay. And it's just something that norm enjoyed a lot growing up. And so we carry that tradition over nice. The food was traditional, usually turkey and dressing sweet potatoes, green beans, you know, homemade bread. During those years. I like to bake my own bread. So we had that a lot. And

A Allison 23:05

did you have a special dessert or a particular kind of Christmas cookie that you would always make?

A Alma Wakefield 23:11

Not always there was this jello that my mom made growing up that was to cranberry and strawberry jello. It was real red and Christmassy I think I did that for a while. Until it kind of just we didn't care for Yeah. I remember doing that when the kids were younger. But one thing we did do in California that was special is we would have we had a friend that had a home on Balboa Island, which was not far from where we lived in Huntington Beach. And there was a boat parade all these big fancy boats that people owned would decorate their boats for Christmas. And we would go sit and watch the boat parade and they would sing and you know, it was kind of a special event we would do many years we did that. During Christmas. I'll go to Knott's Berry Farm where they had Christmas caroling. I think we did some Christmas caroling from time to time yet. And one of the things with the grandchildren at Christmas was exchanging gifts of course, white elephant gift times. Sometimes we go to the beach, here in Texas. Just different things that we did as a family seeing music was always a part. Yes. Of everything, too. Yeah, same

A Allison 24:23

course your piano teacher and music is a big part of your family. Yeah, it is. So you have a lot of boats in your traditions, too, because you have this tradition about going down to the riverwalk in the boat. Oh,

A Alma Wakefield 24:37

that's right. Yeah, that's right. Since we've been in Texas, almost every year for 20 years. We have taken a boat ride during the month of December when the rivers all lit up. And this the grandchildren came along. I can remember them being very young all the way to almost adults taking this trip each year. but it really is a tradition that we missed last year. Yeah, for the first time.

A Allison 25:06

And you guys sing,

A Alma Wakefield 25:07

and we sing. We sing Christmas carols. Yeah. And if we have room, we'll invite other people on the boat, but usually our families that really big fills up the boat. Yeah. And so that's, that's been fun for the grandkids.

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Allison 25:20

Yeah. And good. And I think my son got to go on one of those.

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Alma Wakefield 25:24

Did he do that? Okay. I think it's right.

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Allison 25:27

So for our listeners, my son is married to Alma's granddaughter.

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Alma Wakefield 25:33

Yes, yes. Wonderful.

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Allison 25:35

And so we have that connection. So yes, I do believe that he got to go maybe on the last one that you guys did.

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Alma Wakefield 25:41

I think you're right. That's right.

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Allison 25:43

That's so fun. Well, we all know that it can be crazy during Christmas, just hectic, crazy schedules, lots of things to do. You want to do all the things, but we can't do all the things. So what what are some ways that you have found to sort of curb the craziness of the holiday season

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Alma Wakefield 26:02

For me, it's keeping a schedule. And part of my schedule, daily schedule is getting up and spending quiet time with the Lord. And that sets the pace for my day. And when I don't do it, I'm sorry. Especially during the December,

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Allison 26:20

do you follow a particular devotional at Christmas time? Like any

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Alma Wakefield 26:23

I have done different ones? Nothing in particular, every year, but just different Christmas devotions? Yeah. But that's so good to set your mind at peace and rest and and try not to do everything right, realize that there's so many good and wonderful things you can do, but you can't do them all. And so pick out the ones that are most special. I loved almost every year when the granddaughters and grandsons were little. We would do Christmas gingerbread man. Cookies. Yeah. And sugar cookies and Christmas cookies. And that was always a lot of fun, or do the gingerbread house. But also, you know, just on Christmas Day, we usually read the Christmas story. And when the kids were little, we had different activities. I can remember Amanda playing with plastic one, you know, that? We mica would our son would tell her the Christmas story. Oh, and so just lots of good memories like that. Yeah. Yeah. You know, it's the different seasons. There's time when I was growing up. Yeah. We went back to my grandparents always Christmas, both sets of grandparents. So that's my memory. Yeah. And my cousin, I always got the same gifts wrapped. Exactly. But anyway, that's that was. And then there's the season of raising the children, you know, and then the grandchildren. And it's real different now. Usually on Christmas Day, it's just norm Amanda and me unless we have someone in, like, because the families now do their own Christmases on Christmas day. Yeah. But we always get together when we can, right. It's not that we don't get together, we just make it another day or, you know, things change as families grow. Absolutely. And so we we still do that with family, but not on Christmas Day. Like the last few years, we have spent Christmas Day with his parents a lot. And before that sometimes my parents, which seemed to be important when they're alone, perhaps to go and spend it with them. We've done that a few times. So the changes, yeah. Changes that we still have great time last Christmas, we did it with a renter. So I was just fabulous. Went to did stuff together and had a good time, you know, on Christmas day.

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Allison 28:57

That's great. It's a great way to show hospitality and

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Alma Wakefield 29:02

now just invite someone in that she didn't have her family here. And so

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Allison 29:08

I think there's always seasons where you find yourself. Either you're single or you are living away from home for whatever reason. Or like you said, you know, maybe you're young, maybe in the young married stage when you don't have kids. Yes, you can. You can still reach out to people.

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Alma Wakefield 29:24

Yeah. Yeah. And I think just remembering that during holidays, especially is important. You know, in the past, we would sometimes have foreign exchange students or you know, people from a different country. Yeah. What are they going to do on a holiday? Right and done that before? We haven't always done the same thing every year. Now that I think about it, we've lived in so many different places, but some traditions you keep the same. Yeah. Other things you change and seasons J.

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Allison 29:54

Again, that's being flexible.

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Alma Wakefield 29:56

I do have the same Christmas tree I've had for 20 years. The grandkids can't believe it. That's impressive. It's still standing. That's impressive. I don't think it has too many more years left.

A

Allison 30:10

All right, well, thanks for sharing your Christmas memories and ideas with us. Okay, who has already done all their Christmas shopping? Yeah, me neither. As you know, if you listen to our homemaker profile of Gayle Wills, I hate the mall. So I will gladly be doing most of my shopping online. And that means lots of delivery drivers will be visiting my front door over the next few weeks. I am so grateful for these people helping to make my holiday preparations way easier, as I'm sure you are, if you choose to shop online as well. So let's thank them, shall we. I started doing this last year after my mom mentioned that her sister, my aunt, whose job involves receiving a lot of packages at her house shows her gratitude for the delivery drivers making so many stops at her home by putting out a big basket of snacks and water for them. I have never heard of this before. I know it's not a new idea. But it was new to me. And I just thought it was the kindest nicest thing ever. So I decided to set up a snack station on my front porch between Thanksgiving and Christmas last year, and it was a big hit. I made a little sign to indicate that the treats were for any delivery drivers or service providers visiting my home. So that included the Amazon folks, of course, the mail carriers, the pizza delivery guy, the bug man, the guys who delivered a new mattress a week before Christmas to my house, and the guy who drops off and picks up the dry cleaning every week. And then anybody else that came by my front door. People were so grateful and pleasantly surprised to find that they were included. In this show of good cheer, we had to convince the pizza guy that he was in fact, he was very hesitant to come forward and take some snacks. But eventually we did get him to take something and he was so grateful. And he said you know I'm working late. And I don't know when I'm going to get to eat because we are so busy. So thank you very much for the snack. Now it doesn't have to be fancy. I just put out a little basket on a plant stand that came off of my back porch, I put it out on the front porch, I set the basket on top. And I just put in some individually packaged snacks, I do recommend that you do that. I don't know how comfortable strangers coming to your door would be taking homemade snacks, but you're welcome to try that if you'd like but I just found it was easier and more comfortable for them. If I just put out like factory wrapped pre packaged snacks. So things like little sandwich crackers, you know that have either peanut butter in the middle or cheese in the middle and then like packages, little packages of nuts, packages of chex mix. And then I would also offer some sweet snacks, some of both because they could take one or the other or both. So I would have little packages of cookies, some candy bars, little packages of you know just any little sweet treat maybe some caramel corn, like some Cracker Jacks or something. And the idea is just to give them a little something to tide them over until their next meal, which might be a long time from then if they're really really busy, which most of those people are during the holidays, it's just a busy time for them. And I always had bottled water out. And then around here we drink a lot of sweet tea. So I would put as well I put out bottled sweet tea, like some Lipton peach tea or something. I didn't bother with an ice chest or putting out a bucket of ice because it's generally pretty mild weather here. It's not super cold. It's typically not really hot in December at this part of Texas. But you might want to think about that if you're going to put out some drinks considering you might want to put them in a bucket of ice or something like that. But that's totally up to you. And then of course make sure you put a little sign near the basket that explains what it is and who it's for ours was really simple. It was just like a little poem I made up you know, something like to delivery drivers and service providers.

We're so thankful for you. I don't know, it rhymed, it was better than that. But you can go on Pinterest, look this up on Pinterest, there are tons of ideas and some people get super elaborate with it. You don't have to do that. But if that's your jam, then go for it. But you can certainly get some inspiration on Pinterest and then a lot of those pins they will link you to a free download of a poem at our cute little sign that they've already created that you can just download that and print that out and that can be your sign. Or maybe you want to get your kids involved and have them make a sign for the to put out with your little refreshment station. This might not work for you if you live in an apartment, or a similar kind of situation where the delivery person doesn't come right to your door. However, if you do have frequent delivery services, and they come right to your front door I just I can't recommend this enough. Just take this opportunity to show hospitality and gratitude. You never know how this simple act could impact someone who's on the receiving end. And after all, this is the season of giving. Alright, I am back with my friend Jan, and we're going to talk about Christmas. So what does a typical Christmas day look like in your house?

J

Jan Lockhart 35:27

My mom started a tradition. And I'm so thankful that my mom taught me that Christmas does not have to be celebrated on Christmas. Because once your kids are grown, and they all start to have their own families, right? I am not going to be that mom that says Christmas will always be at my house. Yes, no matter what. Because my mom was like, she's like, You know what? I mean, my mom is in Illinois. And the years that we could come home, I couldn't come home at Christmas very rarely. So we would celebrate Christmas the first Saturday of December or whatever. And I want to be that too. For my kids. I want to be whenever we celebrate Christmas, we're going to celebrate Christmas. But all that said, when we do celebrate Christmas, Christmas Day, we don't do the big dinner. We have a big breakfast. Okay, big, big breakfast. Everybody helps you know, the bacon and the eggs and the biscuits and gravy and the pancakes and the toast and everything. So everybody's in here cooking like crazy. And then we all sit down to breakfast, have a great time, clean up and then we open presents. Then the rest of the day is just spent in pajamas hanging out. We'll have soup, we'll have sandwiches. Nice, very relaxing day. Very fun. Wonderful. And my kids know, they're all starting the tradition today.

A

Allison 36:42

That sounds wonderful. And I love the the that you pointed out we need to be flexible. Yeah. As our especially as our kids get older and and yeah, yeah. Yeah. So um, let's see. Actually, I wanted to ask you before we move on to number two, is there a you said you do breakfast so you do eggs and bacon and all that? Is there like any sort of special family recipes that must be made during the Christmas season? Maybe not that day for breakfast, but I do have a particular because you love to bake? Do you have a particular kind of cookie that you have to make every year or anything like that?

J

Jan Lockhart 37:16

I do. Yes, there are certain things we always I always have to make. Greg's grandmother had a fudge recipe that we always have to make. And then my mom always made these cookies that were a little shortbread square cookie with a little Carmel on top and little chocolate on top of that night and I always have to make chocolate covered peanuts. And then we always have to decorate the cookies now, and they're not fancy cookies. They're just cookies that that you're going to eat. You're just going to eat your joy and then a variety of other candies. I start baking in the beginning of December my cookies, my

candies because my mom did that you would go OUT out into the laundry room and the whole top of the washer and dryer is full of you know candy oh my goodness, divinity and all kinds of stuff. I love it. So I can definitely carried on that tradition.

A Allison 38:06

That's so cool. Do you have a couple of recipes that you'd be willing to share with our listeners? Sure. Okay, that shortbread? That sounds really good.

J Jan Lockhart 38:14

They are amazing.

A Allison 38:15

Did she make the caramel? Or did she use like a caramel square? Like you make the shortbread? Oh,

J Jan Lockhart 38:20

you, you you you melt the caramels so you melt them down and then you pour that a little?

A Allison 38:26

Like a double boiler?

J Jan Lockhart 38:28

Yes. saying okay, yeah. Yeah, evaporated milk. That sounds powdered sugar. Fabulous. They're fabulous. They're a labor of love.

A Allison 38:34

Yeah, I was gonna say it sounds kind of

J Jan Lockhart 38:36

But they freeze well, so you can stick or you can make them in August and stick

A Allison 38:40

them in the freezer. Yeah. Good to know. Thank you. Okay, well, we'll link a recipe to that. Thank you. So how about traditions? During the holiday season. maybe on Christmas Day. but like you said. you always

do breakfast. But do you do other things? Do you go caroling? Do you do gingerbread? What's any particular tradition?

J Jan Lockhart 38:58

Since the kids are grown? We really don't anymore. But when the kids were little, we always used to go and pick out our tree. You know, we wouldn't go to a Christmas tree farm we would go to Home Depot or what? Christmas tree lot and pick up the tree. And then we would bring it home. We used to have a little glass Rudolph. That would hang on the tree, but it got broken. So and then, you know, we would take turns putting the topper on the tree. Yeah. So we actually had to write out who did it this year. So that the because many arguments about that? No, they did it last year. So I actually still have that piece of paper two. And then we always used to go to a friend's house to do gingerbread. The girls would always do gingerbread houses and we decorate cookies and go over to grandma's house and decorate cookies. Yeah, Christmas was full of a lot of traditions. That's fine.

A Allison 39:43

Yeah. So we know the holidays can be just crazy. Crazy, busy, hectic. How do you maintain balance during the holiday season?

J Jan Lockhart 39:55

A couple years ago is actually I'm kind of ashamed to admit It was a lot more recent than it probably should have been. I decided that Christmas is going to be crazy. And I am not going to let the crowds bother me. So the times you have to go to the grocery store the times you have to go to the mall. And it really is a state of mind. Yeah, really is when I pull up to HEB. And it takes me 10 minutes to find a parking space. Yeah, okay. It's gonna be crowded, take a breath, it's going to be okay. And for the most part, I can you know, enough, I need to run in for one thing, then it's gonna be a little snappy. But for the most part, I can put myself into that frame of mind and say it's going to be okay. But I think really, it's my husband, who is the one who is the balance. He is the one who says, Let's go sit up on the fire pit. You know, let's go put the music on. And let's go sit up at the fire pit and let's just relax and catch a breath. And he forces me to do that. And it's a good

A Allison 41:00

thing. Yeah. Yeah. Otherwise, you would just stay in the kitchen and make more divinity.

J Jan Lockhart 41:04

I would because somebody is coming. And I gotta make sure I have their favorite candies. So. Gotta keep going. That's great. All right. He makes me breathe.

A Allison 41:12

Good. Anything else about Christmas that you'd like to share? Oh, it's

Good. Anything else about Christmas that you'd like to share? Oh, it's

J Jan Lockhart 41:16
amazing. It's amazing. I love it. And this year, unfortunately, none of the kids are going to be home for Christmas. And so

A Allison 41:24
so what will y'all do?

J Jan Lockhart 41:25
I don't have any idea. Okay, I don't I don't know if we will go to see his family up in Dallas, or we'll just stay here. But they do. I'm very thankful that they do try to work it out so that they're either all here or they're all not here. You know, so it's my daughter's just in Houston. So she will be here at some point over the Christmas holidays. But I know Christmas Day, it will probably just be us.

A Allison 41:50
Will you still make breakfast?

J Jan Lockhart 41:52
Yes. Yes, I will hang on to that tradition. Yes. That's great. And we will just sit in our pajamas all day.

A Allison 41:58
That sounds wonderful.

J Jan Lockhart 41:58
Yeah, it is, you know, sometimes those are the best days.

A Allison 42:04
Well, thank you. And Merry Christmas.

J Jan Lockhart 42:05
Thank you. Merry Christmas.

A

Allison 42:12

I am back with my friend Joyce Newhall, we're going to talk about Christmas.

J

Joyce Newhall 42:16

Yay. I love Christmas.

A

Allison 42:19

So tell me about a typical Christmas Day at your house.

J

Joyce Newhall 42:22

So Christmas day in our house would be wake up. And whoever lives in the house who's not Scott or me has to get on the staircase and have their picture taken. So before they're allowed to go down and find out what's under the tree. And then after that, when we lived in Indiana, we would always go to my sister's house. And that would be once upon a time it was a big meal and all all the presents and the cousins and everybody. And we all decided this is just too much work. And so I don't know, maybe 20 years ago, probably when the kids were all like everywhere, and we're 15 grandchildren, we decided let's just do like, good fun appetizers and desserts. And so we like cover the counter with all of that and then just stand around and graze and have a Euchre tournament play, you know, card, rotate card game, and and then open presents. And usually it's the the younger ones who get presents now. So that's, that's our Christmas day.

A

Allison 43:31

That's my favorite way to eat Christmas food.

J

Joyce Newhall 43:34

Is it?

A

Allison 43:35

Yes. Because you get so many different flavors that way. Yes. You know, you just get a little bite of this and a little bite of that. It's so great. I have a question though. What is Euchre?

J

Joyce Newhall 43:45

Oh, yeah, I realized, I don't think as I was saying it. So Euchre is I think it's a card game that really mostly Indiana and Michigan people know how to play. When my kids went to college in other states, they realized, Oh, everybody doesn't know how to play this game. So can you play with a large group or it's like

a four, four people already play it. So when we do a tournament, we set up a bunch of card tables. And now all of our nieces and nephews are adults and they're married and all everybody knows how to play poker. And so you know, you kind of get assigned a partner and then winners. Winners move and losers stay. I think that's how it goes when you move to the next day the next day. Yeah.

A Allison 44:28

And so do you have to have a special kind of card deck or you use regular card?

J Joyce Newhall 44:32

You use regular cards but you only you only play with the 910 Jack, Queen, King and Ace and

A Allison 44:41

Okay, yeah, does it get crazy and rowdy? Is that that kind of game?

J Joyce Newhall 44:45

It's not one of those fast games like spoons or something. But it's it can get rowdy when once you get down to the place where you know we're getting to the end as is like the last table okay, and everybody is gathered around watching to see who's actually going to win This tournament. Yeah, that's actually that's really really fun.

A Allison 45:02

That's fun. Okay, well, I'm gonna have to go do some research and find the rules of poker somewhere and I'll link it on the on the show note. Yeah,

J Joyce Newhall 45:09

I think it's, I think it's like e-u-c-h-r-e? I think that's how you spell Euchre.

A Allison 45:15

We'll figure it out. Yeah. Okay, cool. Well, what about food? Is there a particular you know, you said you do appetizers and desserts? Is there like a special recipe that must show up on the table every year? Or there'll be problems?

J Joyce Newhall 45:27

Yes. But it's actually for our family, it's Christmas Eve. Okay, so on Christmas Eve. For years, I was directing the children's choir at our church. And so we had Christmas Eve service. and then come home.

And now I'm going to make dinner. Well, that doesn't make sense, right? So we started doing homemade, cheesy potato soup with bacon and green onion on top. And so I can't I can't remember really, when that started. It's been more than 30 years that we were doing it because like the kids were not all my kids weren't even born yet. When we started doing that, and homemade vanilla ice cream follows that. So yeah, that's, that is Christmas Eve with homemade bread, no salad.

A

Allison 46:16

Oh, my goodness, I'm hungry now. Well, can you share your cheesy potato soup recipe with?

J

Joyce Newhall 46:24

Sure. Great. Yes, no, I wouldn't be very happy to share that with you. I've shared it with a lot of people. It's great special to our family. And I would love to do that.

A

Allison 46:32

Thank you. Appreciate that. Well, what about other traditions that your family does at Christmas time? Just any time throughout the season? Are there things that you, you feel like you really need to do or it's not quite been the right Christmas?

J

Joyce Newhall 46:44

Yeah. And it's funny now, because Christmas is very different. Our kids are all married. And so every other year, we have Christmas with our kids. And then every other year, we get Thanksgiving with our kids. And so we've all decided that Christmas Day and Christmas Eve can be any time that we need them to be in order for us to be all gathered from all these states together. But something that just must happen after we eat our cheesy potato soup, and eat our bread. And before we get our ice cream. We always when the kids were growing up, we would ask on somebody's birthday. So how has this person been a blessing in your life for the last year? And why are you thankful for this, you know, brother, sister, mom, daddy, whatever. And we've always on Christmas Eve, it's Jesus's birthday that we're celebrating. So we know when they were little the things that they shared were just so little kiddish as they've grown and become adults, and the things that they share are deeply meaningful. And it's a super bonding time for our family every year. And we all look forward to it. That is a really, really neat tradition.

A

Allison 47:58

I like that a lot. Yeah, holidays can be just crazy and hectic. What are some of the things that you do to keep the main thing the main thing and keep it between the rails during the holiday season?

J

Joyce Newhall 48:11

So I remember a long time ago, I was a mentor mom for MOPS. And I always think when you're the one who's serving or doing something to help somebody else. The truth is, you wind up being the person who gains something because I gave a little talk. And I asked them the question as we were going into the

gains something, because I gave a little talk. And I asked them the question as we were going into the Thanksgiving, beginning of the holidays, I said I want you to envision with me that it's December 26. And, and that has stuck with me for all these years. That to kind of begin with the end in mind. Yeah, what do I really want to happen through this, you know, several weeks where we are even like celebrating Thanksgiving, but then preparing for Christmas. And, you know, we've always done, you know, some way to celebrate Advent as we've gone along through the year, or through the month, I should say, just slowing ourselves down a little bit. Something that's also really been helpful since the kids have all grown up is we a lot of times we'll just do like a one big family gift. And you know, we've rented an Airbnb for the kids, you know, for the following summer. And we all gather in have a great time, but that was our present to them. And yeah, the truth is, it turned out spectacularly that we could all be together and enjoy that time. But it eliminated a lot of extra stress. And I Yeah, it was one of those things I kind of fell into. Yeah, really great. Like I just thought we should have a vacation together and wouldn't it be great if we gave it to him as a present that then I thought well, that took a lot of stress out because I'm not shopping for You know, 14 people. Right? Right. Yeah, exactly.

A

Allison 50:03

I like that idea of imagine that it's December 26. And what do you want to have accomplished or happen? Or how do you want to feel?

J

Joyce Newhall 50:12

How do you want to feel at that point? Yeah. Like, oh, man, I'm so glad it's over. And we just made it through or I feel like closer to each other closer to the Lord. We've celebrated for real what we're here to celebrate. Yeah. Yeah, that's been really important to us.

A

Allison 50:32

Great advice. Thanks. Thanks for sharing about Christmas. Merry Christmas.

J

Joyce Newhall 50:36

Merry Christmas to you too.

A

Allison 50:41

Don't you just love the question, Joyce asked that group of moms at the beginning of December. Envision with me that it's December 26. How do you want to feel? Do you want to feel exhausted, irritated, disappointed? Or frankly, just glad it's over and you cannot get the tree thrown out to the curb fast enough? Or do you want to feel content, satisfied, closer to your family and closer to the Lord? I would say that most of us would choose the latter, but the former is probably more often our experience. So here's your homework. Take some time to reflect on what your goals are both personal and family goals for this Christmas season. Envision it's December 26. How do you want to feel? And then plan your commitments your hospitality, your gift giving your calendar accordingly. Now, I cannot promise you a perfect Christmas. But might I recommend that you intentionally, regularly set aside time throughout this season to reflect on the reason why this is the season of joy. Something I've done to accomplish this over the years is

incorporating Advent into my Christmas rhythms. So what is Advent? The word comes from the Latin for "coming". Advent is usually observed for the four Sundays leading up to Christmas. Most Advent traditions involve lighting a candle and reading a scripture or a reading based on that Sunday's theme. There's a new theme every Sunday, and depending on your denomination, it'll vary slightly. The order that I'm most familiar with is hope, peace, joy and love. Then Advent culminates in a final candle called the Christ candle, which is lit on Christmas Eve. Advent as a season of anticipation of the coming of Christ to earth. It is a season focused on waiting, all of hopeful expectation of something glorious, that is certainly coming. So sometimes we've done this as a family with just simple devotionals and a little candle each weekend. Other times I've done this as a private devotion. Either way, the point is to be intentional and regular about the practice. So we have a few resources that are linked down in the show notes you might find helpful. Many of them are free. There are a few really, really great books out there that will walk you through the whole admin season with daily devotions. There's ones for families with kids, couples, there's all kinds. So check those out. And also a few years ago, I created some playlists for each of the weeks of Advent. And those are linked in the show notes. There's one for every theme and the idea is to listen to that themes playlist throughout the week, and help you keep your focus on the mattering things of this most wonderful time of year. And those are all available for free on Spotify. Just follow the links in the show notes. Well, that's it for this episode of holiday homemaking. 2021 Thank you so much for listening. Don't forget to subscribe to our email list so you can get your copy of our companion ebook, which will include among other things, Joyce's cheesy potato soup Jan's chocolate, caramel shortbread cookies, and ALMAZ creamed eggs. You don't want to miss it, go to the [art of home podcast.com/subscribe](https://artofhomepodcast.com/subscribe) Or just click the link in the show notes below. And if you enjoyed this episode, would you share it with a homemaker you know who could use some holiday homemaking, encouragement and inspiration. We will be back next week with another special Christmas episode. Until then, keep practicing your art of making a home for the holidays.